ANT-MAN

AND THE FUTURE OF MARVEL

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ANT-MAN

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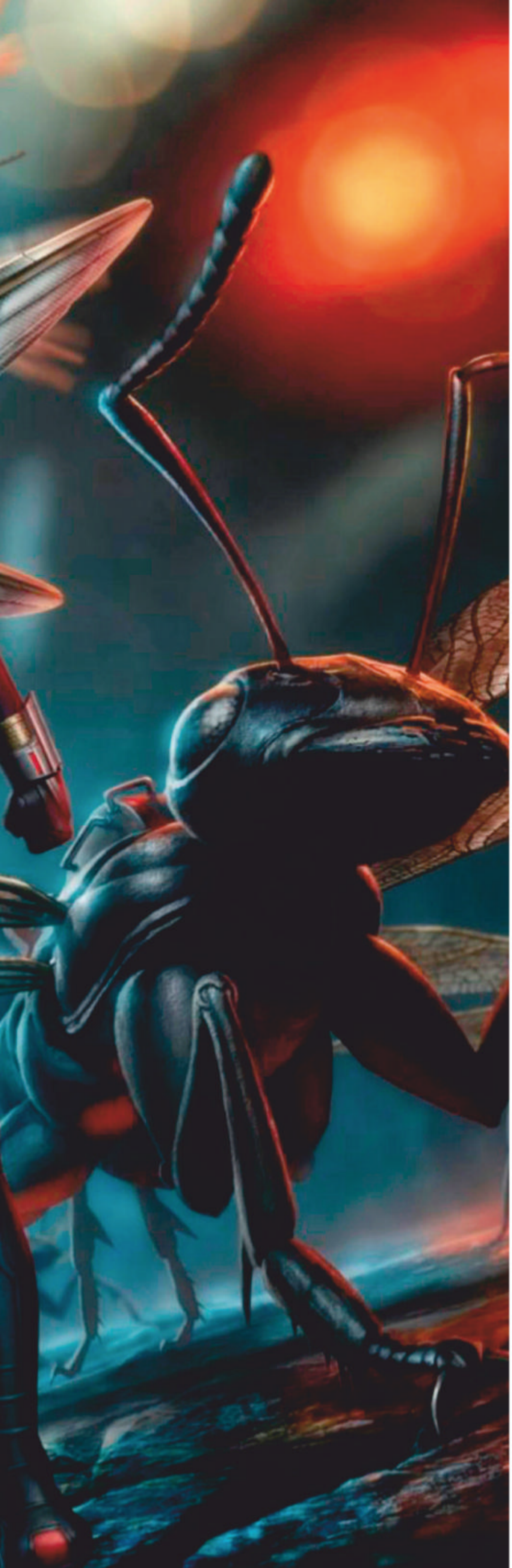

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SMALL WONDERS
Though often overlooked, Ant-Man (far left) and the Wasp are two of the most enduring characters in Marvel comics.

LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT

Why Ant-Man is such a vital part of the MCU

Comic books are full of unlikely heroes and heroines, and Marvel Comics has built an empire on branding such characters onto the public consciousness. By mid-2022, the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) became the highest-earning film franchise in history—surpassing the *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* franchises combined—at more than $26 billion at the box office. The saga is far from over. And standing at the center of where everything is headed is a tiny champion.

To understand the future, it's helpful to remember the past. It has been a long trip for Marvel, which began as Timely Publications in 1939, led by publisher Martin Goodman. He hired Carl Burgos, who created the fiery android Human Torch; Bill Everett, whose Sub-Mariner was the water-based hero of Atlantis; and Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, who created the iconic Captain America. Soon after, Goodman hired his cousin-in-law, Stanley Lieber. He eventually became better known as "Stan Lee," and would go on to write and edit for Marvel for decades—co-creating a host of major characters with Kirby, Everett, Steve Ditko and others.

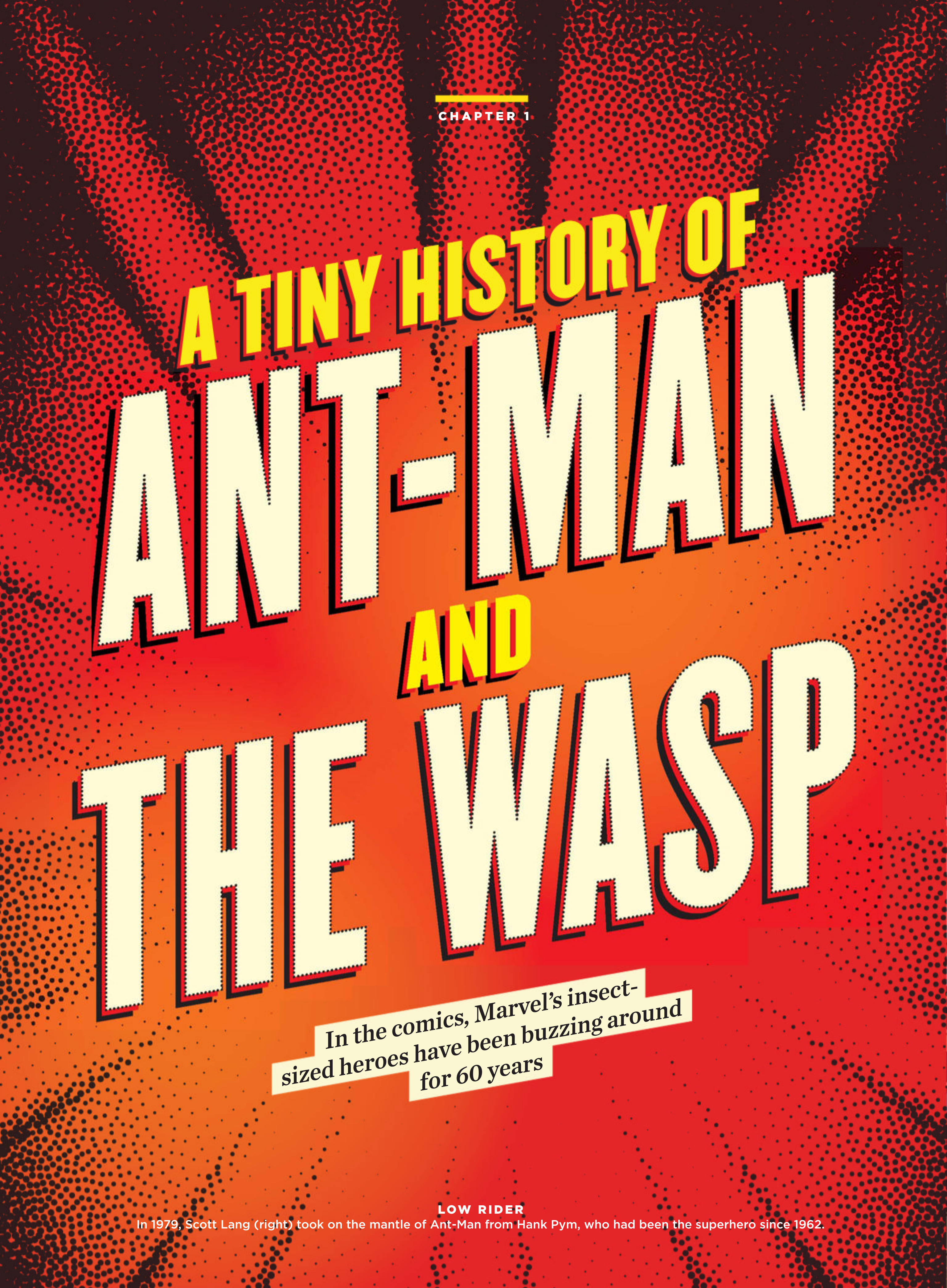
The "Marvel Age of Comics" that fans know today began in 1961. That's when the company introduced, in quick succession: The Fantastic Four, the Amazing Spider-Man, Iron Man, Ant-Man, the Incredible Hulk, Thor, the X-Men, Daredevil, Nick Fury of S.H.I.E.L.D. and Doctor Strange. Unlike main competitor DC Comics, Marvel tried to bring a sense of reality and relatability to their characters, who often had money problems, or fought amongst themselves or voiced political and social opinions. Sometimes, as was the case with the X-Men, the heroes were stand-ins for persecuted minorities, including Black and Jewish people as well as the LGBTQ community.

One of Marvel's heroes of the 1960s—Ant-Man—was popular enough to command his own series of comics for years, but was never quite able to break through to the mainstream. Maybe it was all a perception problem. How exactly would shrinking someone down make them more powerful? But, as the Biblical story of David and Goliath illustrated, the small can be mighty.

Stan Lee always knew this to be true. And, as Ant-Man's co-creator, he spent years trying to sell Hollywood on the idea of featuring the fun-size hero on television or in a movie. But until 2015—53 years after his comic debut—Ant-Man's Hollywood dreams had been shrunk to nothingness.

Then, in June 2015, Disney proved that Lee was right all along with the successful theatrical release of *Ant-Man*, starring Paul Rudd in the title role. Guest appearances in other films showed how Ant-Man and his companion, the Wasp, were not only worthy of inclusion in the MCU, but maybe even its saviors.

Now, as *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* arrives in theaters on Feb. 17, 2023, Marvel fans are about to see the pair go up against a villain who will strike at the core of Marvel's Multiverse. The epic battle in *Quantumania* will literally decide the fate of the future of Marvel. Big stuff, indeed.



CHAPTER 1

A TINY HISTORY OF ANT-MAN AND THE WASP

In the comics, Marvel's insect-sized heroes have been buzzing around for 60 years

LOW RIDER
In 1979, Scott Lang (right) took on the mantle of Ant-Man from Hank Pym, who had been the superhero since 1962.

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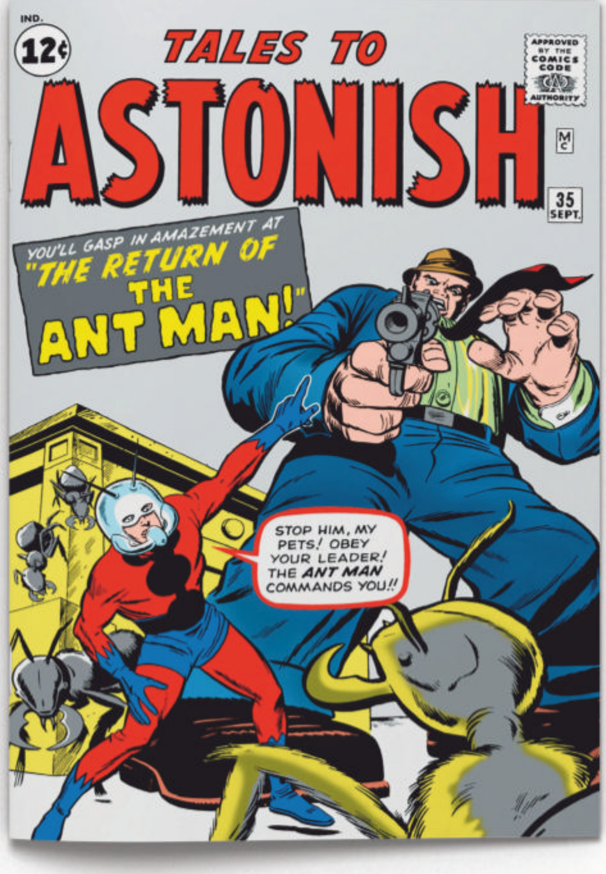
CHAPTER 1

Tiny characters have long been popular in classic storytelling. Often, the shrunken beings are magical in nature, ranging from fairies to elves to brownies to leprechauns, as well as to more obscure creatures such as Pukwudgies and Korrigans. Jonathan Swift introduced the Lilliputians in *Gulliver's Travels* in 1726, and Lewis Carroll had Alice Liddell drink a potion to shrink herself in 1865's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. As the 20th century dawned, motion picture creators found ways to incorporate shrinking into films, using superimposed images, large props and trick photography to cut characters down to size, as in James Whale's 1935 film, *Bride of Frankenstein* and 1936's *The Devil Doll*.

The first shrinking superhero was Doll Man, created for Feature Comics in 1939 by industry legend Will Eisner. Doll Man predated Captain America by two years as a hero, but the former's adventures fighting Nazis—while riding his canine partner, Elmo the Wonder Dog—never quite became the stuff of legend. Still, Doll Man was popular enough that he gained a new partner in 1951, when his fiancée miniaturized herself to become Doll Girl to fight crime as well. In 1953, both characters disappeared for quite some time and publisher Quality Comics went out of business in 1956.

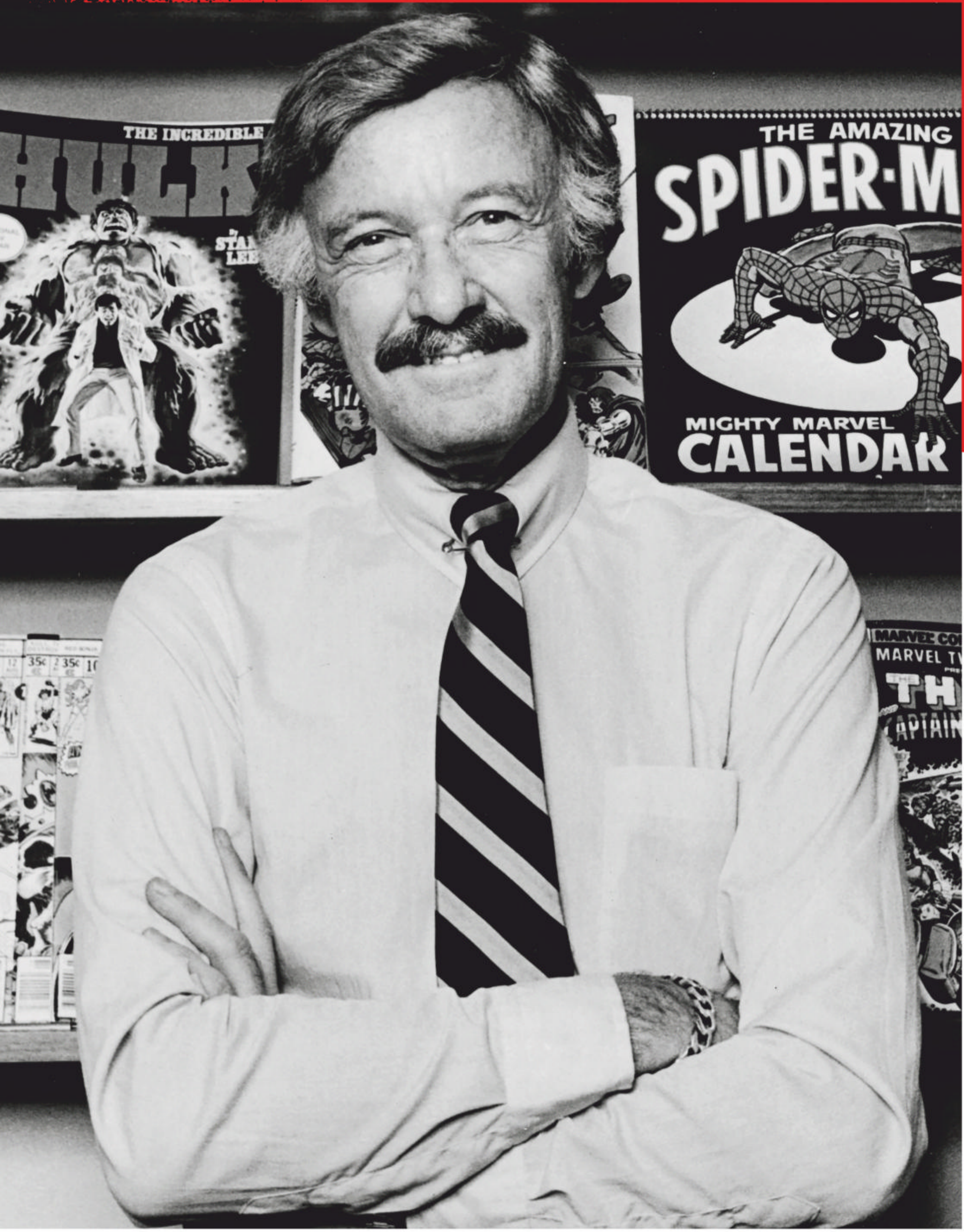
Four years later, Universal-International released the smash-hit science fiction film *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, revisiting the size-changing concept for a new generation of audiences. DC Comics (then known as National Comics Publications) introduced a size-changing heroine in May 1961, adding Shrinking Violet to the futuristic Legion of Superheroes. DC switched genders for the "World's Smallest Superhero" in *Showcase* No. 34 (October 1961), repurposing the name of the 1940s character "The Atom" for a new tiny titan: scientist Ray Palmer, gifted with shrinking powers. Three months later, one of Marvel Comics' early series, *Tales to Astonish* No. 27, cover-featured the story, "The Man in the Ant Hill!" Plotted by Stan Lee, scripted by his brother, Larry Lieber, and illustrated by comics legend Jack Kirby, the seven-page story introduced a scientist named Dr. Henry "Hank" Pym, who had developed serums that allowed him to shrink or grow matter. Lieber contributed not only the script, but also Pym's name; Lee created the nom de guerre of Ant-Man. When Pym experiments on himself, he accidentally becomes trapped in an ant hill, unable to reach his enlarging potion. If not for the help of a friendly ant, Pym might have perished.

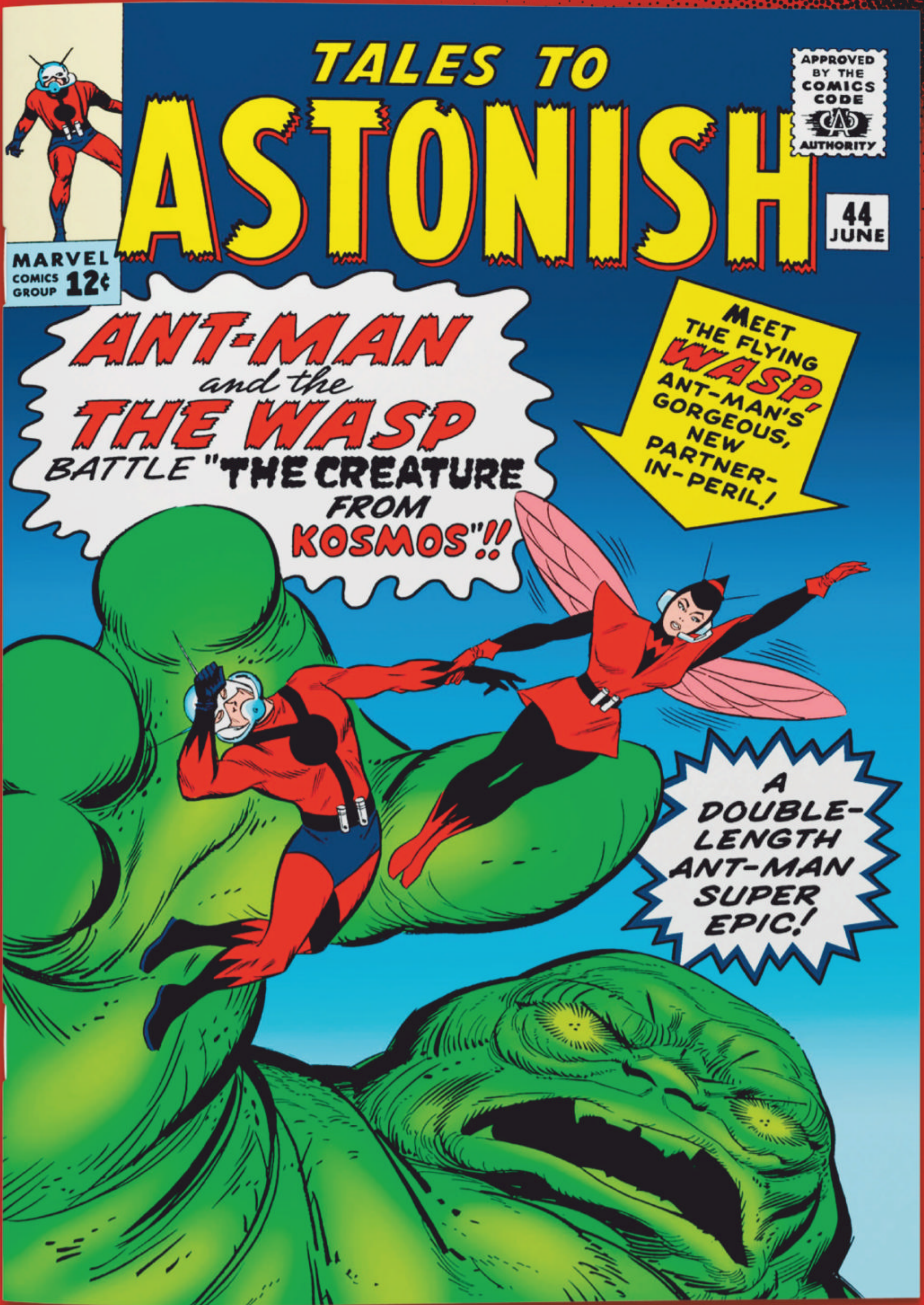
"That sold so well that I thought making him into a [recurring] superhero might be fun," Stan Lee would later recall. Pym returned in *Tales to Astonish* No. 35 (September 1962), this time wearing a bold red, black and blue outfit (made of "unstable molecules" which also allowed it to shrink or expand) and a silver cybernetic helmet that helped him communicate


IND.
12¢
TALES TO
ASTONISH
MC
35 SEPT.
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
YOU'LL GASP IN AMAZEMENT AT "THE RETURN OF THE ANT MAN!"
STOP HIM, MY PETS! OBEY YOUR LEADER! THE ANT MAN COMMANDS YOU!!

STRONG SUIT
In one of Ant-Man's first appearances, the tiny hero wore a red, black and blue suit and a silver helmet (above).

SUCCESS STORY
Stan Lee (right) created Ant-Man at Marvel Comics with his brother, Larry Lieber, and artist Jack Kirby.


THE INCREDIBLE HULK
THE AMAZING SPIDER-M
MIGHTY MARVEL CALENDAR
MARVEL TV


TALES TO ASTONISH
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
44 JUNE
MARVEL COMICS GROUP 12¢
ANT-MAN and the THE WASP BATTLE "THE CREATURE FROM KOSMOS"!!
MEET THE FLYING WASP, ANT-MAN'S GORGEOUS, NEW PARTNER-IN-PERIL!
A DOUBLE-LENGTH ANT-MAN SUPER EPIC!

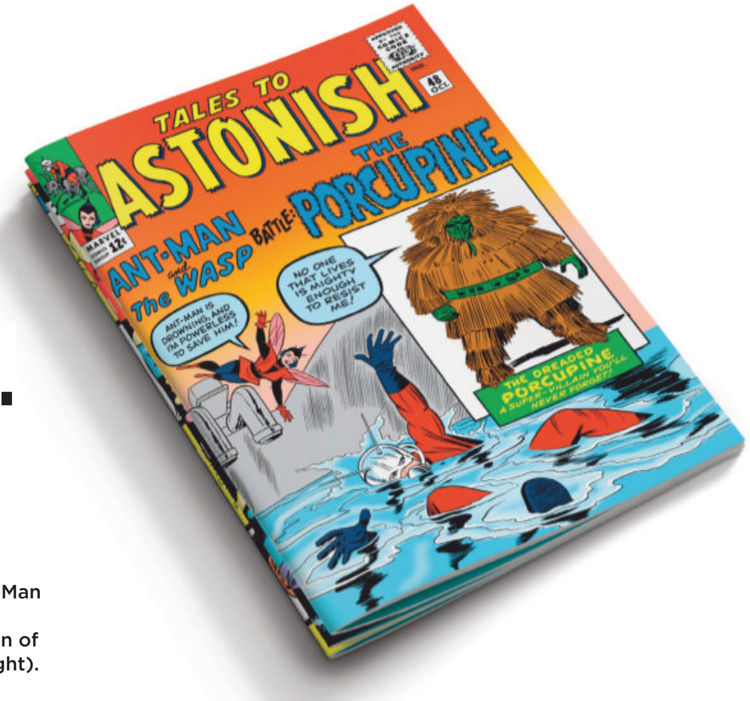
with ants. Now the cover star of *Tales to Astonish,* Pym fought Communists, spies, creatures and villains on his own until issue No. 44 (June 1963), when socialite Janet van Dyne begged him to allow her to become his crime-fighting partner so she could take revenge on the alien killer of her father. Janet not only was able to shrink, but also, thanks to synthetic tissue that Pym had implanted within her, she grew wings to fly and antennae on her forehead. She soon donned wrist weapons that gave her powerful bio-electric sting blasts as well. The Wasp was born.

Like Doll Man and Doll Girl before them, Ant-Man and the Wasp became both comic book headliners and romantic partners. When the Avengers team was formed in September 1963, the diminutive duo were founding members, alongside Iron Man, Thor and the Hulk. When Pym decided to grow instead of shrink in *Tales to Astonish* No. 49 (November 1963), he adopted the new alias of Giant-Man, adding only two letters to his name, but growing to 12 feet tall. Giant-Man and the Wasp moved in and out of the Avengers team over the following years, and Pym changed his name to Goliath in 1966, then Yellowjacket in 1968, gaining his own wings in the process. Van Dyne remained as the Wasp, though her costume changed in almost every adventure.

In a 2015 interview for the Smithsonian, Stan Lee blamed the artists for why Ant-Man didn't catch on as much as other heroes, and why he had to adopt other names and costumes, saying, "Ant-Man should have been as popular as any... The reason it didn't work in comics ... they didn't put the special effects in. When they drew Ant-Man, they made him look normal sized. They would draw a figure of a man, and we had to imagine that he was only an inch tall or whatever he was... My one failure, because I always think that I'm a good explainer: I couldn't get the artists to realize they needed him to look very small. Put him next to a kitten and let the kitten look like a tiger and he's that small. That would be an interesting drawing. But just showing him looking life-sized with the paw of the kitten, it didn't mean anything. Somehow they couldn't get the difference. And I think that's the reason the character didn't do well: visually, the pictures were never that interesting."

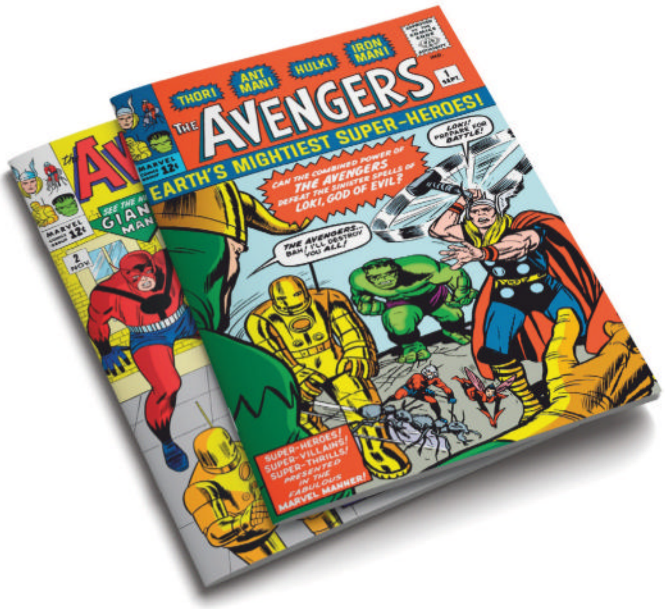
Whatever name or costumes they chose, Pym and Van Dyne remained close, and the pair married in 1969, becoming the second of Marvel's superhero married couples. Over the years, however, Pym struggled with his mental health, a condition that worsened when his robot creation Ultron gained sentience and became a nearly unstoppable villain.

ANT-MAN AND THE WASP BECAME BOTH COMIC BOOK HEADLINERS AND ROMANTIC PARTNERS.


TALES TO ASTONISH
48 OCT.
MARVEL COMICS GROUP 12¢
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
ANT-MAN and The WASP BATTLE: THE PORCUPINE
ANT-MAN IS DROWNING, AND I'M POWERLESS TO SAVE HIM!
NO ONE THAT LIVES IS MIGHTY ENOUGH TO RESIST ME!
THE DREADED PORCUPINE A SUPER-VILLAIN YOU'LL NEVER FORGET!

STINGER MISSUS
Six years after her debut in June 1963 (left), Janet van Dyne (the Wasp) married Hank Pym (Ant-Man).

COVER COUPLE
Working together, Ant-Man and the Wasp were in Marvel's regular rotation of front-page features (right).


THOR!
ANT MAN!
HULK!
IRON MAN!
THE AVENGERS
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST SUPER-HEROES!
CAN THE COMBINED POWER OF THE AVENGERS DEFEAT THE SINISTER SPELLS OF LOKI, GOD OF EVIL?
THE AVENGERS... BAH! I'LL DESTROY YOU ALL!
SUPER-HEROES! SUPER-VILLAINS! SUPER-THRILLS! PRESENTED IN THE FABULOUS MARVEL MANNER!
SEE THE NEW GIANT MAN

FOUNDING MEMBERS Ant-Man and the Wasp were original Avengers when the team of heroes made its first appearance in 1963 (above).

BIG CHANGE When Pym decided to grow instead of shrink, he became 12 feet tall and was known as Giant-Man (right).

> **"I WANTED SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT ... FROM PYM, SO I CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF A REFORMED CRIMINAL."**
>
> **—DAVID MICHELINIE**

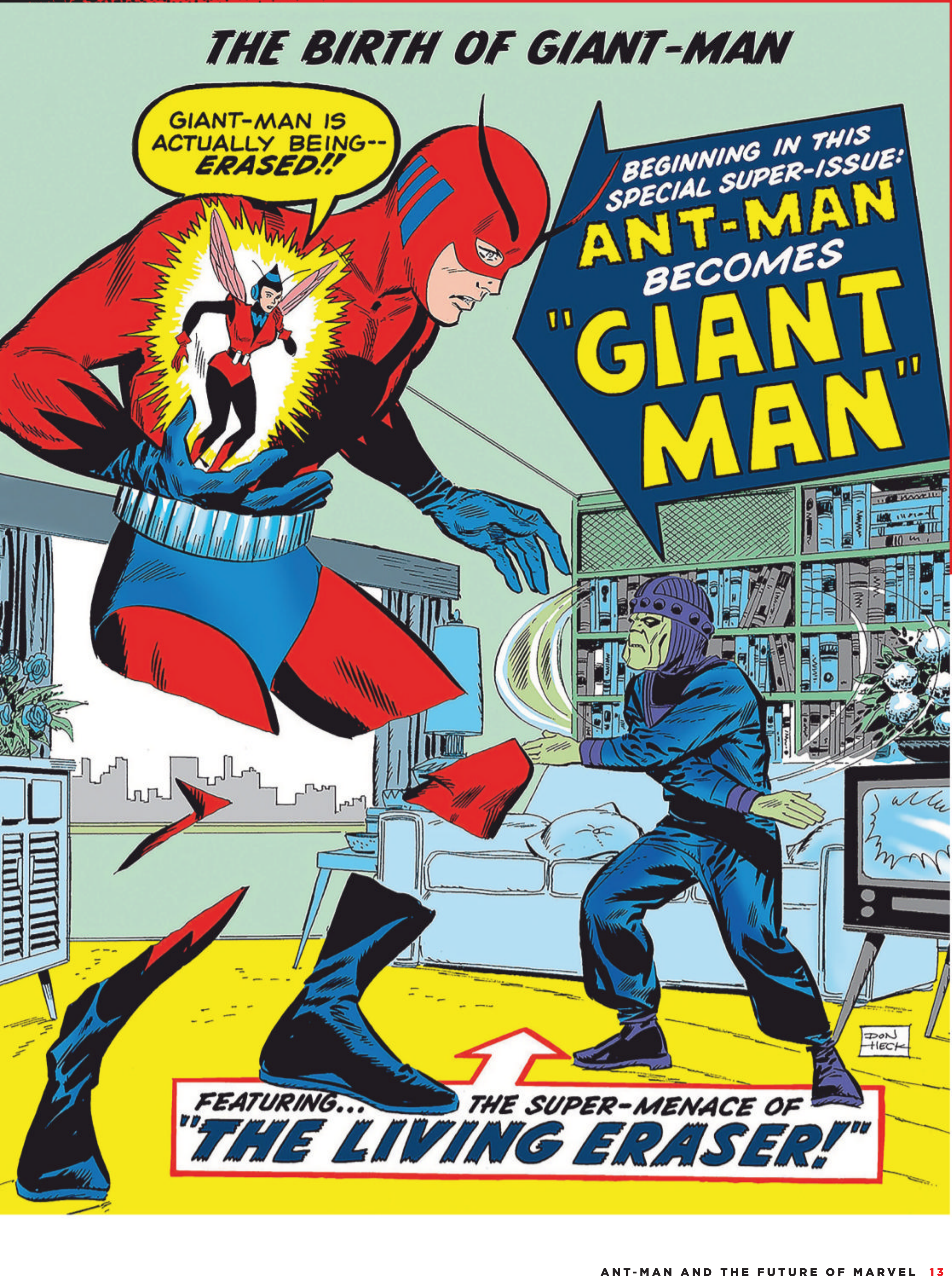
In and out of the Avengers, Pym's increasingly fragile mind began to deteriorate, and by the 1980s, he had angrily hit his wife, gotten expelled from the Avengers, and even contemplated suicide. Van Dyne eventually divorced him in 1981.

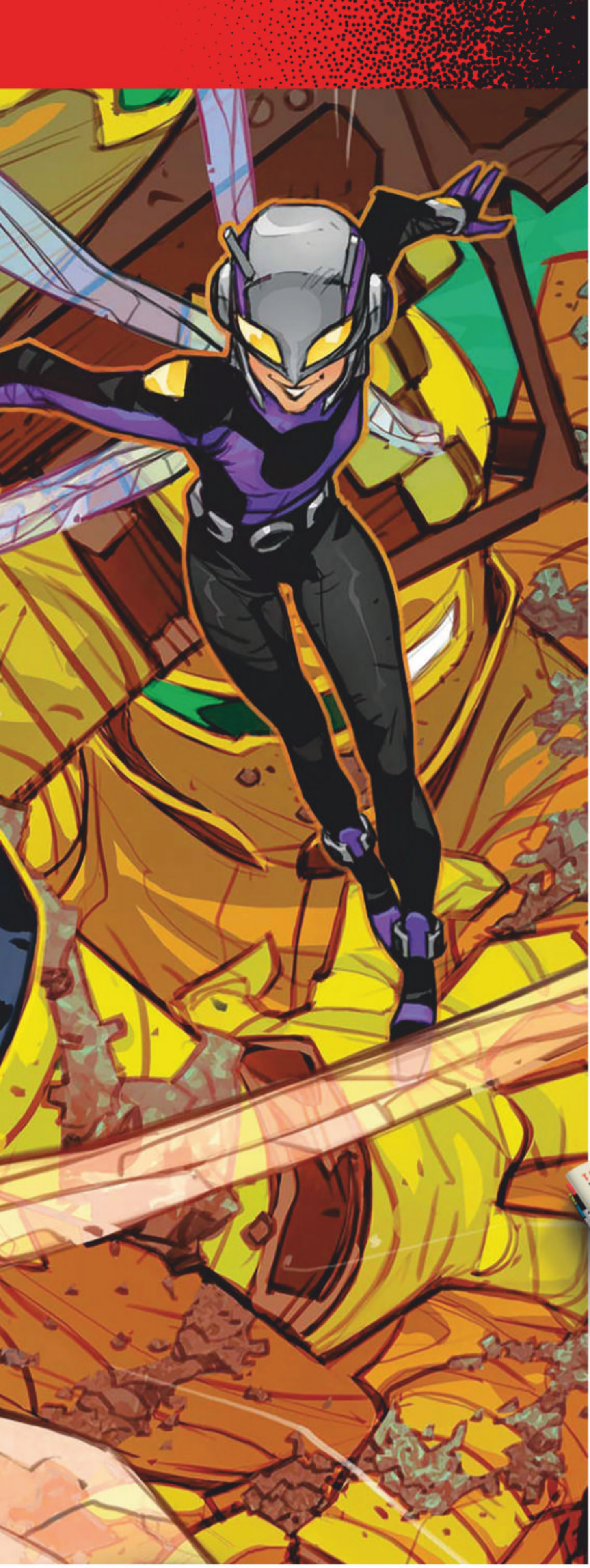
Marvel's then editor-in-chief, Jim Shooter, wrote much of the material that brought Pym so low. On his blog in 2011, Shooter wrote, "Before I embarked on the storyline that led to the end of Hank Pym and Janet van Dyne's marriage, I reread every single appearance of both characters. His history was largely a litany of failure, always changing guises and switching back and forth from research to hero-ing because he wasn't succeeding at either. He was never the Avenger who saved the day at the end and usually the first knocked out or captured. His most notable 'achievement' in the lab was creating Ultron. Meanwhile, his rich, beautiful wife succeeded in everything she tried. She was also always flitting around his shoulders, flirting, saying things to prop up his ego."

Around this time, in 1979, thief and electronics expert Scott Lang had stolen Pym's Ant-Man suit and equipment, in an effort to help his sick daughter, Cassie. With Pym's permission, Lang embarked—after facing a new archenemy in millionaire Darren Cross—on a career as the second version of Ant-Man. Lang was the creation of writer David Michelinie, and artists Bob Layton and John Byrne. In *Back Issue* magazine, Michelinie said, "I wanted something completely different, in both origin and motivation, from Pym, so I came up with the idea of a reformed criminal—not an unjustly accused innocent, which would have been the expected angle. And I figured that, as a burglar, he probably enjoyed the adrenaline rush of his previous 'job,' so the excitement of heroic adventure could fill that need in him, but legally."

Over the next 25 years, Lang's Ant-Man aided the Avengers and the Fantastic Four, and fought alongside Iron Man, Spider-Man and the Micronauts. Enjoying a long journey as Ant-Man, Lang eventually joined the Avengers himself, until his apparent death in 2004.

Following Lang's demise, teenage Cassie Lang used the powers she had gained from exposure to Pym's growth-controlling "Pym Particles" over the years to become the superheroine Stature, joining the Young Avengers in 2005. A low-level agent of


THE BIRTH OF GIANT-MAN
GIANT-MAN IS ACTUALLY BEING-- ERASED!!
BEGINNING IN THIS SPECIAL SUPER-ISSUE: ANT-MAN BECOMES "GIANT MAN"
DON HECK
FEATURING... THE SUPER-MENACE OF "THE LIVING ERASER!"



ROTATING ROSTER In 2020, Lang was Ant-Man and daughter Cassie was Stinger (left). In 2006, Eric O'Grady became Ant-Man (below).

S.H.I.E.L.D. named Eric O'Grady found the Ant-Man suit in late 2006, and used it to become the third iteration of Ant-Man. Starring in a series called *The Irredeemable Ant-Man,* O'Grady and his persona were brought to the comics by *The Walking Dead* creator Robert Kirkman and artist Phil Hester. The series charted a new course, as O'Grady was selfish and manipulative, and had plans that were barely better than the villains whom he seemed destined to face. By 2012, the third Ant-Man had changed his ways enough to mostly be seen as a hero, but he was killed by his enemies before full redemption could be achieved.

Death seemed a constant for those connected to Pym; at various times, Janet van Dyne had been killed (prompting Pym to become the new Wasp for a short time); Cassie Lang, Scott Lang and Eric O'Grady had been terminated; and in 2015, even Pym himself passed on. But because death is rarely final in the Marvel Universe, almost all of the characters eventually returned to life. After all, with time travel, magic, alternate dimensions and quantum entanglements in play, death itself was a relatively small complication.

But while death might be a conquerable foe for Ant-Man and the Wasp, breaking through in Hollywood was more of a challenge.

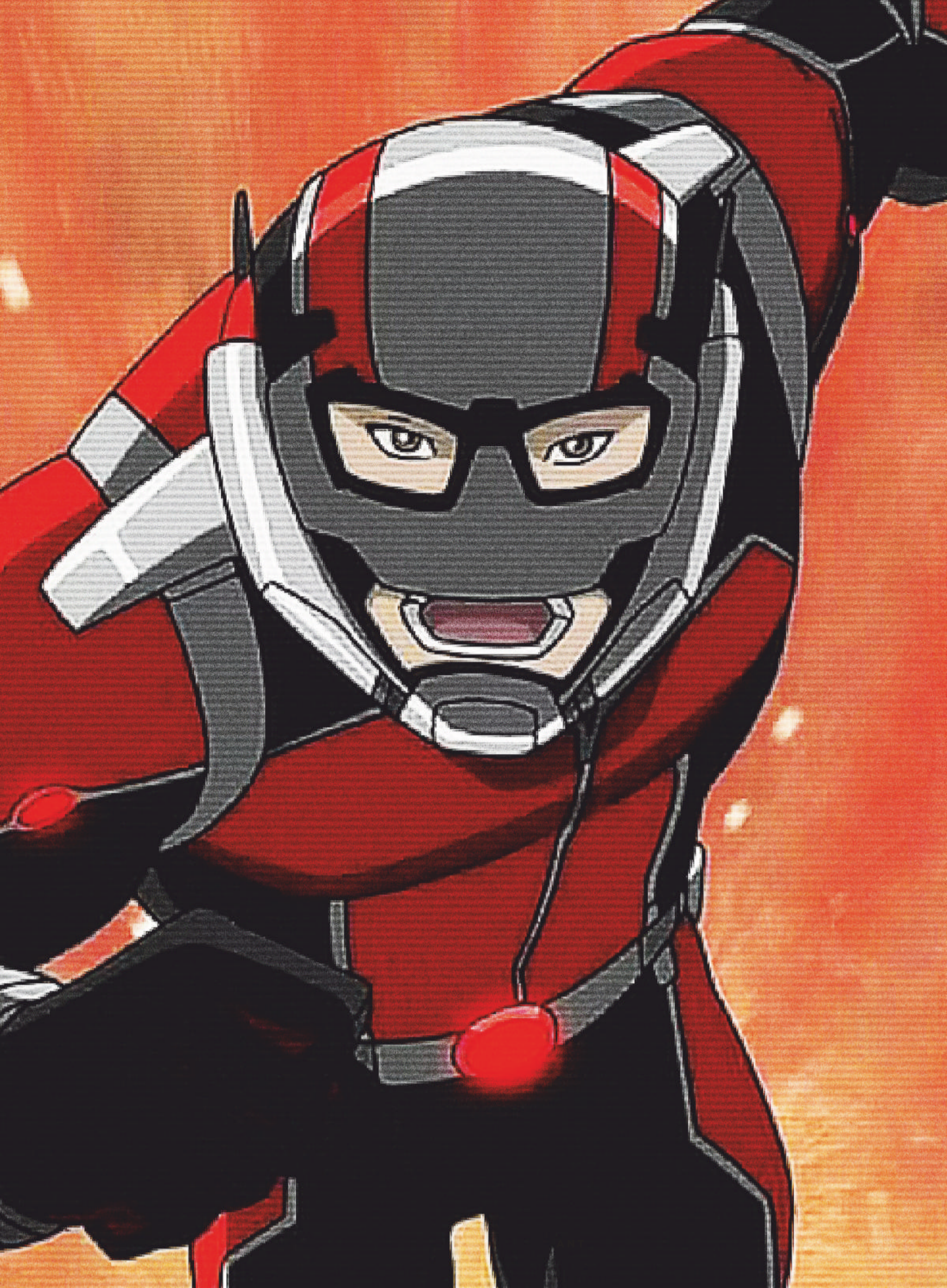
THE WORLD'S MOST UNLIKABLE SUPER HERO
THE IRREDEEMABLE ANT-MAN
TWENTY-THREE SUPER-VILLAINS AND NOT ONE WALLET!
MARVEL .com
KIRKMAN
HESTER
PARKS

CHAPTER 2

SMALL TIME ON THE BIG SCREEN

Even as Marvel's Hollywood presence grew, Ant-Man always seemed to get downsized

IMITATION OF LIFE
Ant-Man was animated numerous times (including in 2015, right), but until recently, never made the jump to live-action movies.



CHAPTER 2

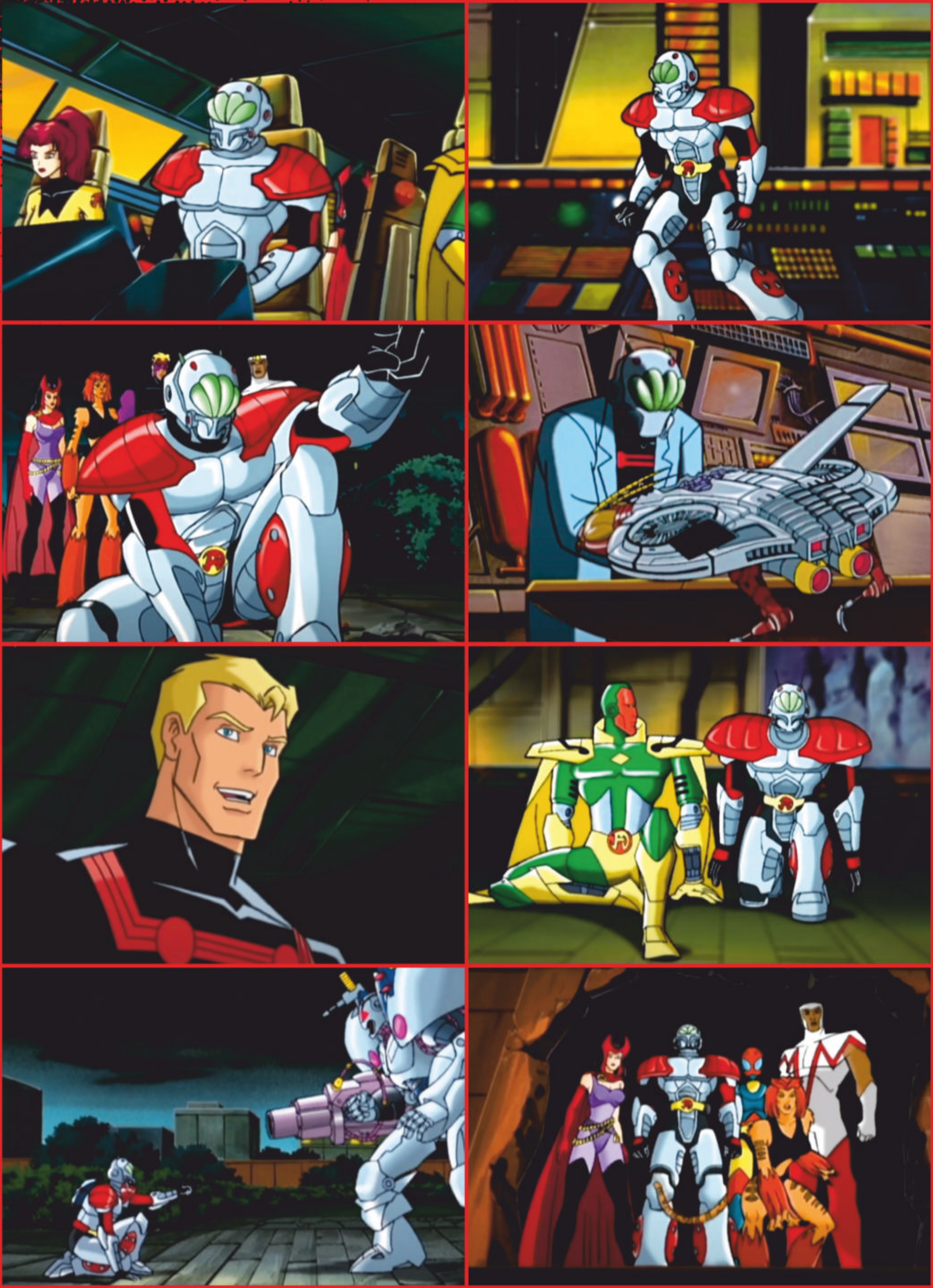
Stan Lee always had a soft spot for Ant-Man, and exalted him whenever Hollywood knocked on Marvel's door. Hank Pym's first screen appearance was in barely animated form in episodes of the *Marvel Super Heroes* syndicated cartoons of 1966. Produced by Grantray-Lawrence Animation, the half-hour show featured multipart stories for Captain America, the Incredible Hulk, Iron Man, the Mighty Thor and the Sub-Mariner. The tales were ripped directly from the comics, with the animators actually tracing comic book panels by Jack Kirby and others. Giant-Man and the Wasp appeared in an episode of the Hulk, and multiple episodes of Captain America, as members of the Avengers. Tom Harvey provided Giant-Man's voice, while the Wasp was voiced by Vita Linder.

Ant-Man also appeared on television in a *Saturday Night Live* sketch on March 17, 1979. At a superhero party organized by Superman and Lois Lane, various DC and Marvel characters mingle. Wearing a remarkably faithful costume, Ant-Man, played by comedian Garrett Morris, engages with the Hulk (John Belushi) and the Flash (Dan Aykroyd). This well-known scene would become important again nearly 40 years later.

During the summer of 1980, Marvel Entertainment Group president James Galton and publisher Stan Lee made a prodigious deal teaming with animation producers David DePatie and Lee Gunther to found Marvel Productions, Ltd., Marvel's first animation studio. They would go on to great success with series such as *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Dungeons & Dragons*, *The Muppet Babies*, *G.I. Joe*, *Transformers* and others. Two of the proposals Marvel tried to sell for animation were Iron Man and Ant-Man (with the Wasp also appearing). Margaret Loesch, the president of the studio, would later say, "Stan kept saying, 'He's a man! Who's an ant! An ant!'"

ANT HERO
Marvel publisher Stan Lee (right, in 1984) was long a champion for his creation to be in the movies.

MARVEL



Marvel Entertainment Group was purchased by New World Pictures in November 1986, and by early 1988, New World had developed a script for the first live-action Ant-Man movie. William Rabkin, who evaluated scripts for New World, would later recall, "Stan Lee loved Ant-Man beyond all reason, and nobody ever gave a damn … He was always on about Ant-Man; he wanted an Ant-Man script in the worst way. I had been arguing against Ant-Man because, let's face it, he can shrink down, go through a keyhole, and look at secret papers in a desk drawer and that's it. It's pretty boring." Still, at one meeting with New World head Bob Rehme, Lee sold him on the project. But, by the fall of 1988, it was listed in industry publications as "dead." Six months later, Ant-Man was revived, with the caveat that it might not involve the character of Hank Pym or even a costume. By mid-1992, the project was dead again, with insiders blaming it on the 1989 Disney movie *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*. Maybe Hollywood just wasn't big enough for two films with tiny protagonists.

In August 1996, Marvel Studios made a seven-year development deal with 20th Century Fox that eventually led to X-Men, Daredevil and Fantastic Four films. Another deal for the Spider-Man franchise went to Columbia Pictures, who released the first Spider-Man film to great success, in 2002. With Lionsgate Home Entertainment, Marvel licensed characters out for eight animated direct-to-DVD films.

Not leaving Saturday morning animation abandoned, Marvel produced *The Avengers: United They Stand*, which aired on Fox from 1999–2000 and featured Ant-Man and the Wasp. Executive producer Avi Arad would say at the time: "Making Ant-Man the leader makes all the sense in the world. His only real power is he's a super scientist. He's married to Janet van Dyne, who's the money person and the power behind the Avengers, and both of them were two of the founding members." Rod Wilson voiced Pym, while Linda Ballantyne was Van Dyne.

Around 2000, Ant-Man also had its strangest courtship yet. Radio shock-jock Howard Stern met with Marvel to try to secure rights to an Ant-Man film. A longtime comic fan, Stern said on a July 2015 broadcast that "about 15 years ago I had a meeting with Marvel. I tried to buy the rights to Ant-Man because I said, 'That's a cool franchise.' I really tried."

"STAN LEE LOVED ANT-MAN BEYOND ALL REASON, AND NOBODY EVER GAVE A DAMN."

—WILLIAM RABKIN

CARTOON CAPERS
From 1999–2000, Ant-Man was featured on the Saturday morning show *The Avengers: United They Stand* (left).

CELEBRITY BACKING
Radio show host Howard Stern (above)—a longtime comic fan—tried to buy the rights to an Ant-Man film.

STUDIO SUIT
Marvel president Kevin Feige (below, in 2022) had been contemplating an Ant-Man movie since the early 2000s.

WRIGHT STUFF
In 2006, Marvel announced British director Edgar Wright (right) as the writer of a new Ant-Man film.

By May 2000, a deal was struck between Artisan Entertainment and Marvel Enterprises for an ambitious slate to turn 15 characters into feature films and other projects. Along with Captain America and Thor, the projects included Deadpool, Black Panther, Morbius, Iron Fist, Longshot, Power Pack, Mort the Dead Teenager and Ant-Man. That slate never came into play, and in 2004, the game was about to change.

Based on a plan by Marvel chief operating officer David Maisel, Marvel Studios received backing in September 2005 to self-finance their own movies. Marvel was loaned $525 million to make 10 movies over seven years; the catch was that if they failed, Merrill Lynch would gain control over the 10 biggest characters in Hollywood. It seemed a risky move, but Marvel was certain that they could make successful films for Captain America, the Avengers, Nick Fury, Black Panther, Ant-Man, Cloak & Dagger, Dr. Strange, Hawkeye, Power Pack and Shang-Chi. “These titles have such great public awareness that we are virtually guaranteed [strong] opening weekends,” chief executive officer Avi Arad said. “Then we’ll make sequels.”

Ant-Man had been simmering in the background during all of the development deals, and had not been without a suitor. British director and writer Edgar Wright met with Artisan in 2003 in Los Angeles. In a 2006 interview, Wright said, “They asked if I was a Marvel comics fan, and I said that I always was a Marvel Comics kid, and they said, ‘Are you interested in any of these titles?’ The one that jumped out was Ant-Man because I had the John Byrne *Marvel Premiere* from 1979 that David Micheline had done with Scott Lang that was kind of an origin story. I always loved the artwork, so when I saw that, it just immediately set bells going off…. ‘Huh, that could be interesting.’ So, we actually wrote a treatment for it, which… I don’t think it ever got sent to Marvel.”

Wright teamed with Joe Cornish to write the film pitch for *Ant-Man*, utilizing Scott Lang as a burglar, and an Elmore Leonardesque tone. “*Ant-Man* was basically doing a superhero film… and it takes place in another genre, almost more in the crime-action genre, that just happens to involve an amazing suit with this piece of hardware… It really appealed to me in terms that we could do something high-concept, really visual, cross-genre, sort of an action and special effects bonanza, but funny as well… they came back saying, ‘Oh, we wanted to do something that was like a family thing.’”

Wright met with Marvel’s head of production, Kevin Feige, and Avi Arad about working on something for Marvel. It just so happened that Wright had an unused *Ant-Man* pitch to show them. By the 2006 San Diego Comic-Con, Wright and Cornish were announced as the writers of an upcoming Ant-Man film, with Wright set to direct. At the time, Wright said they wanted to, “have a film that basically is about Henry Pym and Scott Lang, so you actually do a prologue where you see Pym as Ant-Man in action in the ’60s, in sort of *Tales to Astonish* mode basically, and then the contemporary, sort of flash-forward, is Scott Lang’s story, and how he comes to acquire the suit, how he crosses paths with Henry Pym, and then, in an interesting sort of Machiavellian way, teams up with him.”

Over those same years, the again-renamed Marvel Entertainment regained the rights to some of its characters to use in films, including Hulk, Namor the Sub-Mariner, Black Widow and Iron Man. On

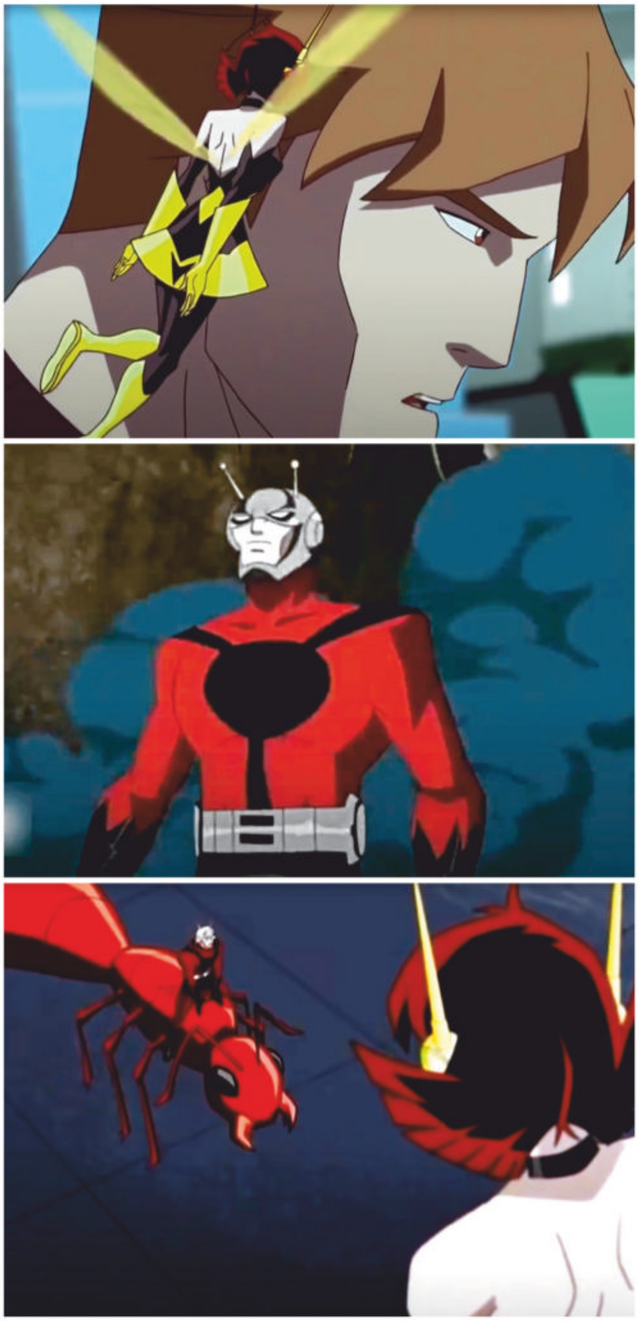
“ANT-MAN WAS BASICALLY DOING A SUPERHERO FILM … AND IT TAKES PLACE IN ANOTHER GENRE.”

—EDGAR WRIGHT

March 12, 2007, Marvel’s feature film *Iron Man* began production. The movie was released on April 14, 2008, and earned an astonishing $585 million. Now Marvel had the success it needed to move forward, full speed, on its ambitious Phase One plan of interconnected Marvel Cinematic Universe titles.

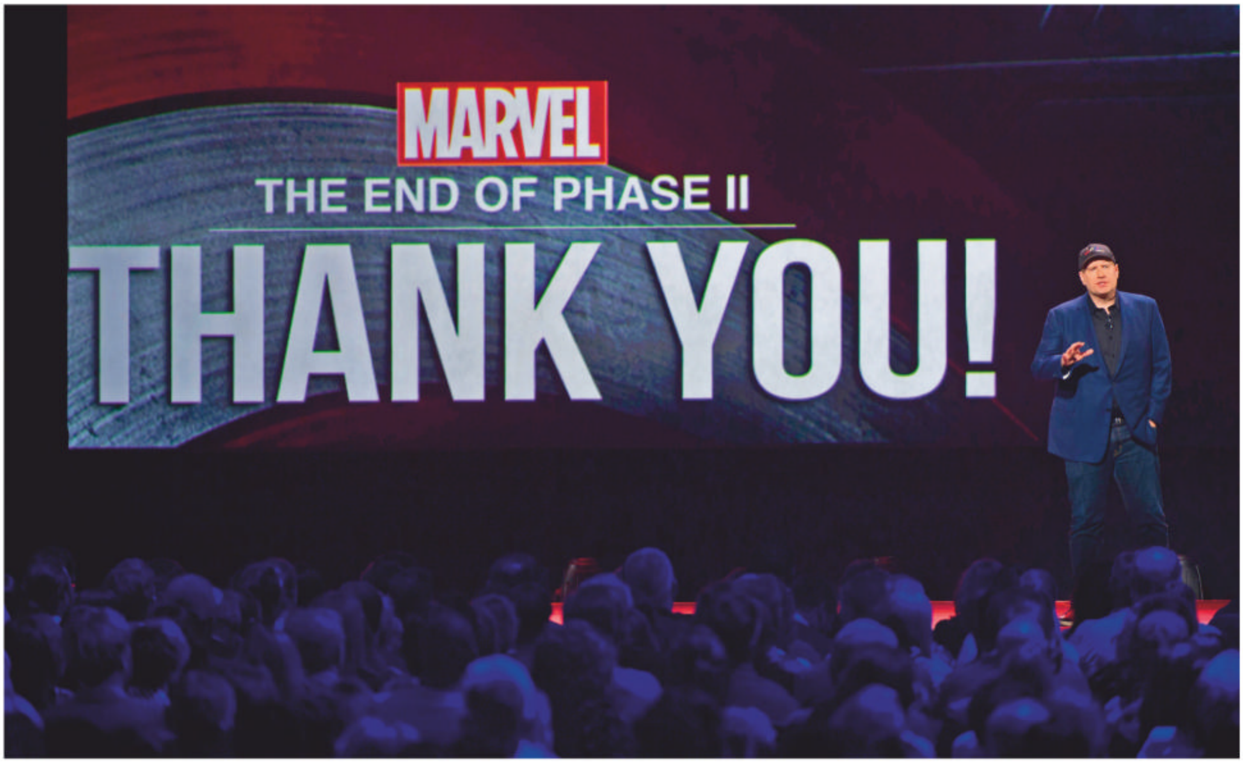
By March 2008, Wright would say that not only was *Ant-Man* scripted, but that, “we’re doing a second draft of it. It’s going to be less overtly comedic than anything else I’ve ever done. It’s more of a full-on action-adventure, sci-fi film but with a comedic element.” After making the comic-book-based film *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* in 2009–10, Wright was ready to bring *Ant-Man* to the fore. At Comic-Con 2010, Wright would say that Ant-Man couldn’t appear in the first Avengers movie because “my film is very much an introduction to that character, and so it wasn’t something where it felt right to introduce him in that film. Maybe if I do the solo Ant-Man film and maybe there’s a later *Avengers*, then they could draft him in later. But it didn’t work with the kind of angle that we were going to do with the origin that I’d written.” A reference to Ant-Man was to be included in the first Thor movie, but was cut. Meanwhile, actors Adrien Brody and Nathan Fillion were rumored to be considered for a lead role.

Another new development rocked Marvel in December 2009, when The Walt Disney Company purchased Marvel Entertainment for $4 billion. Although the two companies assured Hollywood that the move would not affect any preexisting film or



SUPER STAPLE
Ant-Man’s animated run continued with *The Avengers: Earth’s Mightiest Heroes*, from 2010–12 (above).

MOVIE TALK
In August 2015, shortly after the debut of the *Ant-Man* movie, Feige spoke to fans at the Disney Expo (right).


MARVEL
THE END OF PHASE II
THANK YOU!

television deals, the incalculable weight behind the world's most profitable entertainment giant was now with Marvel. Every decision now held extra peril, and every release had to be a hit. Disney mostly left Marvel Studios to its own already-planned projects, instead concentrating on folding in the characters to its toy lines, publishing and theme parks.

Ant-Man did appear in animated form during all of these years of feature film development. Disney XD's *The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes* series from 2010–12 starred Wally Wingert as the voice of Ant-Man; Colleen O'Shaughnessey as the Wasp and Cassandra Lang; and introduced Scott Lang to television, voiced by Crispin Freeman. Lang's Ant-Man also appeared in Disney XD's *Avengers Assemble* series (2013–19), voiced by Grant George and Josh Keaton. Lang also appeared in multiple episodes of Disney XD's *Ultimate Spider-Man* from 2015–17, including one episode featuring the Quantum Realm. There, he was voiced again by Grant George.

In July 2011, Wright revealed that the third movie draft of *Ant-Man* had been finished, and while it would have been his next film, in 2013, Marvel instead let him make *The World's End* with producer Eric Fellner, who had been diagnosed with cancer. Wright shot a special effects test reel for *Ant-Man* in June 2012 and showed the footage at Comic-Con in July. It featured Ant-Man infiltrating a building and fighting armed security guards. The audience erupted with cheers.

In October 2012, Marvel finally gave *Ant-Man* a theatrical debut date of Nov. 6, 2015, making it the first film in Phase Three of Marvel's timeline, and Marvel's 12th self-financed feature film. In September 2013—just one month before Wright was set to begin preproduction on the film—Wright tweeted: "Now I'm back in L.A., it's high time to finish a little something I've been working on..."

Disney revised the debut date to July 21, 2015. With casting underway, the director in town, and a schedule set, it finally appeared that after more than a decade in development, *Ant-Man* was going to march to the movies. Then came the proverbial can of killer bug spray...

CHAPTER 3

IT'S A BUG'S LIFE

The movie crew behind *Ant-Man* had no idea how big their project was going to grow

DODGING BULLETS
As a live-action Ant-Man, Paul Rudd rides his insect mount through a hail of CGI gunfire.

MOVIE MARVEL
Marvel president Kevin Feige (left) at the June 26, 2019, premiere of *Spider-Man: Far From Home*.

COMIC DUO
Ant-Man director Peyton Reed (below, left) and star Paul Rudd at Comic-Con in 2014 in San Diego.

As production on *Ant-Man* began, Kevin Feige revealed to the press that the film would be a heist movie, and confirmed that Scott Lang was the lead character. Filming was intended to take place in England, but was moved to Pinewood Atlanta Studios in Georgia. Shortly before Christmas 2013, actor Paul Rudd was announced as the title hero. Within a few months, the rest of the lead cast was signed and announced: Michael Douglas as scientist Hank Pym (the 1980s Ant-Man), Evangeline Lilly as Pym's daughter, Hope van Dyne, and actors Michael Peña, Corey Stoll and others in supporting roles.

Although Wright and Joe Cornish turned in a fifth draft of the script in March, tension was rising behind the scenes over the direction of the story. On May 23, 2014, the bug bomb went off: Marvel and Wright issued a release stating: "Marvel and Edgar Wright jointly announced today that the studio and director have parted ways on *Ant-Man* due to differences in their vision of the film. The decision to move on is amicable and does not impact the release date on July 17, 2015. A new director will be announced shortly." A few years later, Wright finally revealed why he had left the project, saying, "The most diplomatic answer is I wanted to make a Marvel movie but I don't think they really wanted to make an Edgar Wright movie... I was the writer-director on it and then they wanted to do a draft without me, and having written all my other movies, that's a tough thing to move forward... Suddenly becoming a director for hire on it, you're sort of less emotionally invested and you start to wonder why you're there, really."

On June 7, Peyton Reed—director of *Bring It On* and several other comedies—was announced as Wright's replacement. Reed had, at one time, been signed to direct one of the Fantastic Four films, but had departed before production. Now he was getting his chance to rejoin the Marvel Cinematic Universe. "I started reading Marvel comics when I was in elementary school, and it has been a really important part of my life," Reed said in a 2015 interview. "I felt like I had relationships with these characters. So,

Peyton Reed
Paul Rudd
SAN DIEGO COMIC CON

when I got the opportunity to do *Ant-Man*, obviously I jumped at the chance. This is a character I knew for decades at this point... It's a dream come true."

Comedy writer Adam McKay was brought in to make contributions to the script, which was still largely the one Wright and Cornish had written. Paul Rudd, who had worked with McKay before, also worked on the screenplay. Together, they added Janet van Dyne, the Quantum Realm and a battle with the Falcon, an Avengers member. Though the Quantum Realm had been mentioned in Marvel Comics before, the more common term there was "microverse," but when legalities meant that name couldn't be used, real-life quantum physicist Spiros Michalakis suggested the "Quantum Realm" instead. Understanding that scientific concept would actually allow Marvel to plant seeds for the future of the Marvel universe, from Doctor Strange and Captain Marvel to later multiversal threats.

Under the code name "Bigfoot," *Ant-Man* began principal photography in San Francisco on Aug. 18, 2014, moving to Georgia a month later. In October, Marvel held a press event to announce their plans for Phase 3, with Feige announcing a slight shuffle of releases, saying: "*Ant-Man* truly is the end of Phase Two and *Civil War* is truly the beginning of Phase Three." Responding to a query about whether the movement of *Ant-Man* to follow *Avengers: Age of Ultron* made it seem like an after-thought, Feige said: "It's not. The truth is the phases mean a lot to me and some people but... *Civil War* is the start of Phase Three. It just is. And *Ant-Man* is a different kind of culmination of Phase Two because it very much is in the MCU. You meet new characters and you learn about Hank Pym and his lineage with the MCU over the years. But at the same time, it also picks up the thread of *Age of Ultron* in terms of heroes—major heroes, Avengers—coming from unexpected places. Whether it's prison in the case of Scott Lang or being very disgruntled Sokovian Twins as Wanda and Pietro are in *Age of Ultron*. And in that way it connects a lot. Also, Hank Pym's attitude towards Avengers, towards S.H.I.E.L.D, and kind of the cinematic universe in general, is much more informed after the events of *Age of Ultron*, and in a certain way, before the events of *Civil War*."

Principal filming of *Ant-Man* was completed on Dec. 5, 2014. Now, Marvel and its six visual effects

> **"I STARTED READING MARVEL COMICS WHEN I WAS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ... IT'S A DREAM COME TRUE."**
>
> **—PEYTON REED**

STARS OF THE SHOW
At Comic-Con in 2014, (above, from left) Reed, Rudd and Michael Douglas greet Ant-Man fans.

POSTER BOY
Rudd holds up a picture of his super-suited alter ego at Comic-Con in San Diego in 2014 (right).

To Andy
To Andy -
EXCLUSIVE
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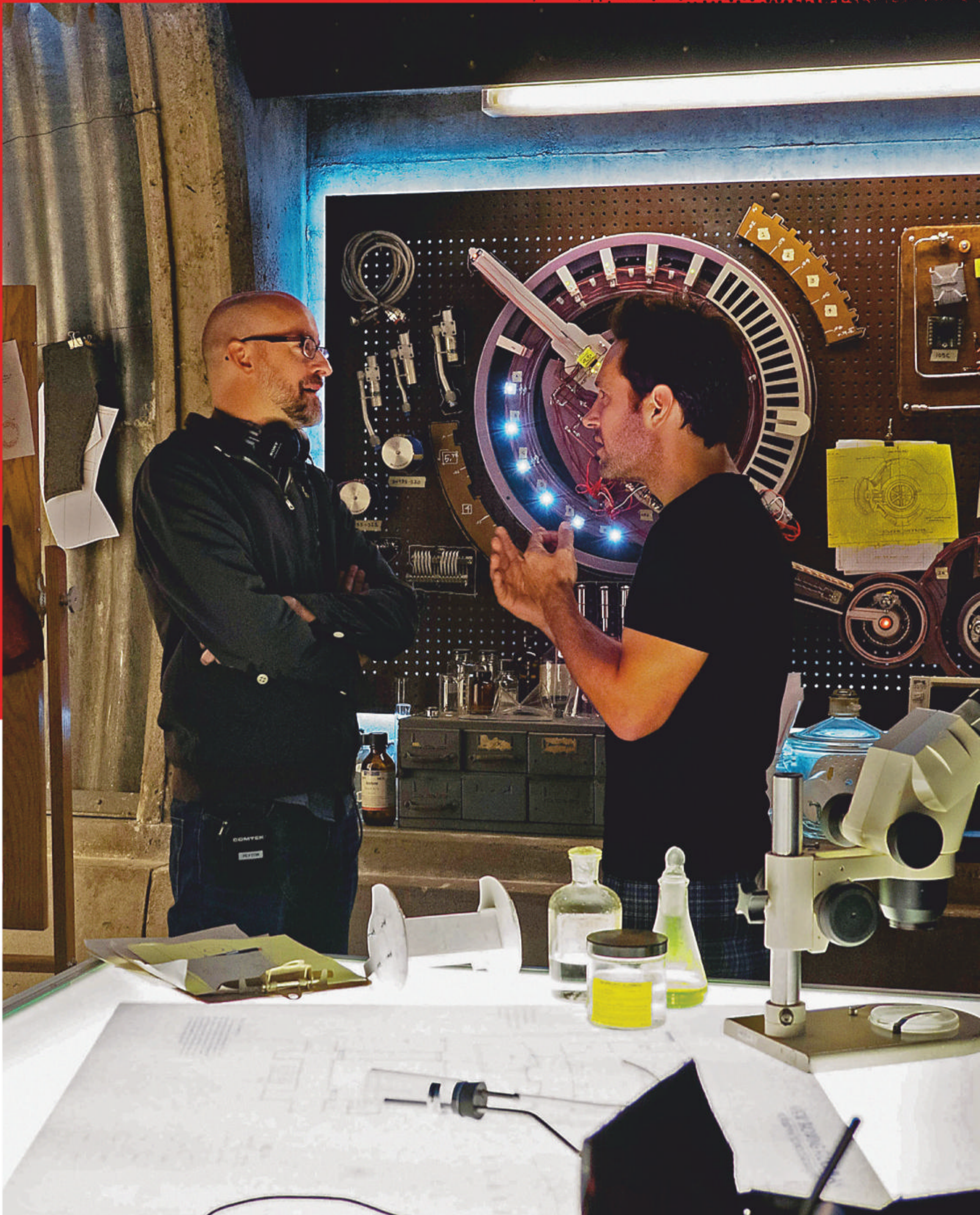
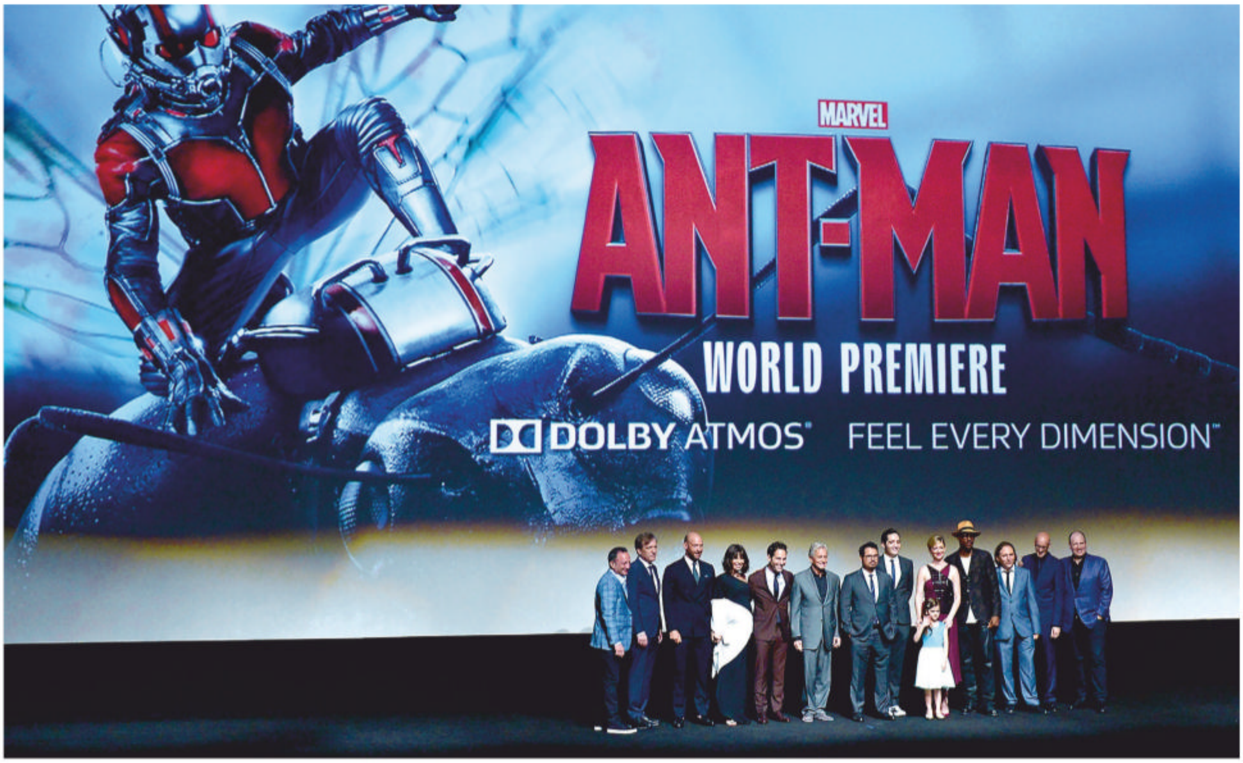
SPAR MOMENT
Director Peyton Reed (far right, in glasses) squares off with Evangeline Lilly (Hope van Dyne).





teams had enormous amounts of work to do to make the film measure up—and shrink down—in all the right ways. Some scenes, such as those with Stoll in costume as Yellowjacket, were completed with motion-capture technology, utilizing face dots and full-body suits worn by cast members. Shrinking sequences used computer-generated imagery (CGI). Sequences with a de-aged Michael Douglas were done with a combination of CGI and body doubles, while makeup and wigs helped make other characters older. Other effects were done with "practical" (real) props, or wire-work for stunts and flight, while macro photography, fractal rendering, fluid simulations, animation, digital modeling, and a host of computer techniques helped to complete not only shrunken encounters, but scenes in the Quantum Realm as well.

As *Ant-Man* raced to its completion date of June 25, 2015, the plot of the film began to be revealed through trailers and merchandising. The story begins in 1989, when the government agency S.H.I.E.L.D. attempted to duplicate Dr. Henry Pym's

> **"I'M DOING PHYSICAL THINGS I HAVEN'T DONE IN FILMS BEFORE."**
> **—PAUL RUDD**

ROLE CALL
Paul Rudd (near left) talks with Reed on the set of *Ant-Man*.

STAGE CREW
The cast of *Ant-Man* attends the film's world premiere at the Dolby Theatre in L.A. on June 29, 2015 (above).

(Michael Douglas) Ant-Man shrinking technology, and Pym hides it away from them, determined never to allow it to be weaponized. In modern day, Pym is estranged from his daughter, Hope van Dyne (Evangeline Lilly), and has been pushed out of Pym Technologies by the power-hungry Darren Cross (Corey Stoll), his former protégé. Cross, meanwhile, is working on his own shrinking technology, code-named "Yellowjacket."

Meanwhile, charming thief Scott Lang (Paul Rudd) is released from prison and visits his young daughter, Cassie (Abby Ryder Fortson), but is unable to find work. Reluctantly, he agrees to a burglary job with his old cellmate, the fast-taking Luis (Michael Peña). The job doesn't go quite as planned, however, when Lang only finds an old motorcycle suit and helmet. He soon discovers it is the Ant-Man suit when

COSTUME PLAYER
Beneath the helmet it's still Rudd (above), who until *Ant-Man*, was known mostly for his work in comedies.

BOFFO BLUEPRINT
In a scene from the blockbuster, (from left) Lilly, Rudd and Douglas plan things out.

> **“HANK PYM, FIRST OF ALL, HE HAS A SENSE OF HUMOR. HE HAS A SLIGHT TONGUE IN CHEEK.”**
>
> **—MICHAEL DOUGLAS**

GROUND LEVEL A suited-up—and very small—Rudd in a scene from the movie (below).

GLOW BUSINESS Darren Cross (Corey Stoll, near right) and Hope (Lilly) share a moment in a publicity still from *Ant-Man*.

he inadvertently shrinks. Lang quickly discovers that he’s being manipulated into helping Pym and his daughter steal the Yellowjacket from Cross, who intends to sell the shrinking technology to villainous organization Hydra. Lang is trained to become Ant-Man, but that barely helps him when he encounters Avengers member Falcon (Anthony Mackie) and is forced to fight him. That’s all only a precursor to a battle between Ant-Man and Cross that moves from a child’s bedroom into the subatomic Quantum Realm... where Pym’s wife, Janet van Dyne, aka the Wasp, disappeared years ago.

Paul Rudd began acting in 1991, with mostly comedic roles in such films as *Clueless*, *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*, *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* and *Knocked Up*, among others. A huge part of Rudd’s charm onscreen is his relatability. Speaking about *Ant-Man*, Rudd said: “I’m doing physical things that I haven’t done in films before. But at the end of the day, it’s a character who’s struggling to find his way in the world, and that’s not unlike other things I’ve played. There is some kind of Everyman to it that I

think people will relate to. He's got issues with his family and struggles, and those kinds of things I've always been drawn to."

One of the most heavily feted actors in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Michael Douglas had won two Academy Awards, five Golden Globes and one Emmy, among other achievements. In 2015, Douglas said: "Hank Pym, first of all, he has a sense of humor; he's got a slight tongue-in-cheek. He likes to test people a little bit and put them on. He's obviously a brilliant scientist, but combined with that he has a military-like training in weaponry. Because of situations that exist, he is looking for a person that can take on his role and he picks this recent ex-convict, Scott Lang [Paul Rudd], and now he is going to teach him all the tricks of the trade of Ant-Man." As for working with Rudd, Douglas said: "I used to get a little jealous because my role as Hank Pym is to maintain the plot, to carry the storyline, to do the scientific explanations… It required a lot of dialogue pertaining to facts and figures, and Paul always got to just react, and he would have a line at the end of a scene, that was always funny. A lot of times he improvised."

Evangeline Lilly was best known to entertainment fans from her role on the TV series *Lost*, on which she played Kate Austen from 2004–10, but she had cut her special effects teeth working on two of Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* films. When asked why Hope van Dyne wasn't the one to wear the Ant-Man suit, Lilly said: "She has … major issues with her overprotective father, which she has to sort out in this film… I just really wanted to make sure that she was a fully multi-dimensional person and not some cliché of a woman or even a cliché of a comic book character. I think one of the things that Marvel does really well is fully developing the humanness of all of their characters… Hope is a very cold, detached, fierce woman, so I just wanted to make sure that we also saw her humanity."

Before he played Darren Cross/Yellowjacket, Corey Stoll was known as an alcoholic congressman on Netflix's *House of Cards*, and a vampire-fighting CDC doctor on the FX series *The Strain*. A lifelong comic fan, Stoll was actually cast by first director Edgar

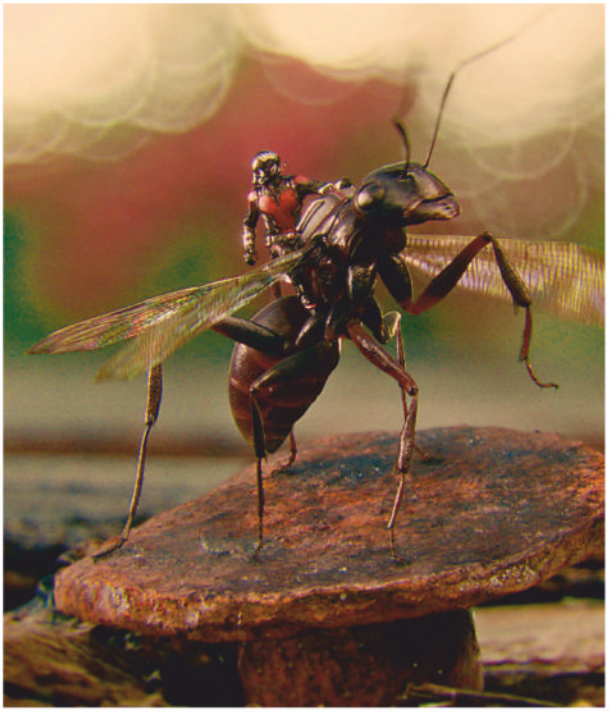
Wright, and he begged Marvel to let him play the villain. "It's just such a huge canvas and the palette is such bright colors." Stoll said in 2015. "That's why I felt the courage to really ham it up in front of a green screen in a unitard. Everything is conspiring to make you feel ridiculous, and yet you know that it's going to be the best special effects team, the best editing, and that it's all going to be so well done."

In addition to Anthony Mackie's surprise appearance as Falcon in the film, the vintage flashback sequence featured John Slattery as Howard Stark, and Hayley Atwell as Captain Peggy Carter, roles they had played in previous (and later) Marvel films and television shows. Additionally, Stan Lee made his regular Marvel movie cameo appearance, this time as a bartender. In 2015, David Dastmalchian, who played a minor character in the film, recalled bringing a copy of *Avengers* No. 249 with him when he met Lee on set for filming. "I told him about my first comic. I just had a son, and he asked me what my kid's name was. I said, 'It's Arlo.' He took my *Avengers* and wrote, 'To Arlo, your friend Stan.' I've got it framed in my house."

But the cameo that most people missed the importance of was that of the man playing a cabbie in San Francisco. The hack startled when Scott Lang fell on top of his taxi was none other than Garrett Morris, the comedian who had played the first live-action Ant-Man in the 1979 *Saturday Night Live* television sketch. The scene had lasted only a few seconds, leading Morris to joke to the press: "You probably went to the men's room and missed it, but that's all right. If you were in the movie, and you closed your eyes, you didn't see me. I closed my eyes, and I didn't see me." Still, director Reed's insistence at having Morris for the gag won him accolades from fans.

As 2015 began, Marvel released an "ant-sized" teaser trailer that would require a magnifying glass to view, shortly before releasing the real teaser. The film was soon part of a public relations and marketing bonanza, with viral videos, publicity stunts, scientific contests and even Michael Douglas and an Ant-Man stand-in ringing the closing bell of the New York Stock Exchange. Disney was determined that *Ant-Man* would not flop, spending over $34 million on television advertising alone.

The red carpet world premiere of *Ant-Man* was held at Hollywood's Dolby Theatre on June 29, 2015.



INSECT POWER *Ant-Man* stood strong at the box office, earning an estimated $519.3 million and winning praise from critics.

RIDING HIGH After the success of the movie's release, Marvel announced a sequel on Oct. 8, 2015.

Following Canadian and French debuts, the film was released to over 3,800 theaters in the U.S. on July 17, with large format versions, 3D versions and Imax 3D versions, among others.

Although *Ant-Man* didn't have as quick a rise as some other Marvel movies had, when the final accounting was done, its worldwide box office take was $519.3 million, which made an estimated $103.9 million profit after the $130 million budget and all marketing costs were subtracted. Critical response was strong, as was fan reaction. Ant-Man toys flew off the shelves, and book and comic tie-ins sold well.

It seemed only a matter of time before Marvel would announce an inevitable sequel—and it did, on Oct. 8, 2015—but Ant-Man had a stopover to make along the way first... and a new set of powers to try out.

CHAPTER 4

THIS MAY STING A LITTLE

The MCU was a man's world until Ant-Man and the Wasp shared equal billing

TINY TEAM
Co-stars Rudd and Lilly were the centerpieces of the first Marvel movie to feature a female character in a title role.

Moving *Ant-Man* to the end of Phase Two made *Captain America: Civil War* the start of Phase Three. Linking the two films was a post-credit scene in *Ant-Man* with Captain America and the Falcon, in which Falcon implied that he knew someone who could help. The post-credit scene was shot by directors Anthony and Joe Russo, who were helming *Civil War*.

Under the working title of "Sputnik," *Civil War* began filming at Pinewood Atlanta Studios on April 27, 2015, the same studios where *Ant-Man* had been shot. Alongside almost every major Avengers member, Paul Rudd came to the set in character, as did actor Tom Holland, making his debut as the latest Spider-Man. In an interview, Kevin Feige revealed that Hope van Dyne had originally been slated to appear as the Wasp (following her being gifted the Wasp costume at the end of *Ant-Man*) but that her role was cut from an early script because, "there are so many characters in *Civil War* that we didn't want to do her a disservice... We haven't seen her as Wasp and we don't want to rob the opportunity of seeing her in the outfit for at least almost the first time, and seeing her dynamic with Scott in a way it could play out, so we're saving it. But it's going to be in Phase Three for sure."

In *Civil War*, the public destruction and casualties caused during the events of *The Avengers*, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, have led the United Nations to pass the Sokovia Accords, providing registry and regulation of all "enhanced individuals." Captain America opposes the Accords, fearing it will inhibit freedom to act for mankind's betterment, while Iron Man supports the Accords, feeling guilty over his role in creating Ultron. After various heroes pick sides, a huge battle takes place at Germany's Leipzig/Halle Airport; one side has Iron Man, War Machine, Spider-Man, Black Widow, Black Panther and Vision, while the other side has Captain America, Winter Soldier, Falcon, Hawkeye, Scarlet Witch and Ant-Man.

In the course of the battle, Scott Lang does something that he hadn't attempted thus far in his adventures as Ant-Man; he uses the Pym Particles to grow

CIVIL WAR WOULD ... BECOME THE HIGHEST-GROSSING FILM OF THE YEAR, WITH A WORLDWIDE INTAKE OF $1.15 BILLION.

MARVEL
TAIN AME

POWER TRIO
Civil War co-stars Anthony Mackie and Chris Evans with Marvel president Feige in Anaheim in 2015 (above).

SHIELD BEARER
Evans in costume for the title role during a scene from *Captain America: Civil War* (right).

НЕ КУРИТЬ
ВЫХОД

instead of shrink, thus becoming Giant-Man for the first time. Producer Feige would say, "It was just a great idea to turn the tide of the battle in a huge, shocking, unexpected way. We have a lot of ideas for *Ant-Man 2*, none of which are contingent upon revealing Giant-Man, so we thought this would be the fun, unbelievable, unexpected way to do that." Ironically, though Giant-Man becomes very powerful in the battle, Spider-Man brings him crashing down by using his webbing to trip him up, in the same way that Luke Skywalker tripped the giant AT-ATs in *The Empire Strikes Back*. Several lines of dialogue make the homage to *Star Wars* crystal clear, something the directors wanted to make unmissable to the audience.

As with *Ant-Man*, a variety of effects work was done to create the Giant-Man sequences. Much of the massive battle scene was shot with green-screen backdrops in Atlanta, allowing artists to drop out the green tones for different background images. Rudd acted out some sequences on set, but some of the other scenes were done with a different performer in a motion capture suit, stomping around slowly, or tearing a wing off an airplane. The motion capture allowed CGI artists to create an exact CGI digital duplicate that was 50 feet tall.

Principal photography for *Civil War* wrapped on Aug. 22, 2015, with nearly 20 visual effects shops working to complete the film thereafter. *Captain America: Civil War* premiered on April 12, 2016, at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, followed by international distribution, and a U.S. opening on May 6, 2016. It would go on to become the highest-grossing film of the year, with a worldwide intake of $1.15 billion.

Although *Ant-Man 2*—officially called *Ant-Man and the Wasp*—had been announced on Oct. 8, 2015, the character continued to appear in animated form in the time after *Civil War*. The aforementioned appearances in Disney XD's 2012–19 *Avengers Assemble* series, and Disney XD's *Ultimate Spider-Man*

BIG RIG
As Giant-Man, Rudd hitches a ride on the back of a truck during a scene in *Ant-Man and the Wasp*.

series from 2012–17, included one episode featuring the Quantum Realm. Ant-Man also headlined his own miniature series in 2017, with two-minute short adventures debuting on Disney XD on June 10. Josh Keaton reprised his role as Scott Lang, while Melissa Rauch voiced Hope van Dyne, making her debut as the Wasp in two episodes. Voiced by William Salyers, Yellowjacket also appeared, despite his apparent demise in the film.

Ant-Man and the Wasp held the distinction of being Marvel's first film—out of 20—to feature a female character in a title role, with a planned release date of July 6, 2018, following the February debut of *Black Panther,* Marvel's first film to feature an African-American lead. Director Peyton Reed returned, saying of the title decision: "It just happened to be organic for the characters of Ant-Man and Wasp... Her last line in the movie—'It's about damn time'—very much about her specific character and arc in that movie, but it is absolutely about a larger thing. It's about damn time: We're going to have a fully realized, very, very complicated hero in the next movie who happens to be a woman."

Writers Gabriel Ferrari and Andrew Barrer, who had done production work on the first *Ant-Man,* worked on the initial script alongside star Paul Rudd and director Reed. *Spider-Man: Homecoming* writers Chris McKenna and Erik Sommers joined the process later. "We initially had these sort of really generalized story meetings about the things we had set up in the first movie and different directions we wanted to go," Reed said in 2018. "I really liked the idea of starting out our leads, Scott and Hope, way further down the road than the end of the first movie—it's like catch-up."

Reed had never directed a sequel before, and said: "This one, for obvious reasons felt like, OK, there's a lot more story to tell with these characters that I have a genuine affection and kind of [a] protective feeling about.... To be able to tell a story like this on the scale that Marvel allows you to tell is, as a director, a wild and great experience."

Because so much of the movie had been scripted to take place in the subatomic Quantum Realm, quantum physicist Spiros Michalakis from the Institute for Quantum Information and Matter at Caltech consulted on the film again, to make certain that the science behind the realm—even as an alternate universe with infinite possibilities—had a basis

in real physics. In 2018, Michalakis said: "Marvel really has gone out of their way to incorporate real, interesting science. I think they realize that so much real science almost feels like science-fiction." Some of the science used in the script included quantum entanglement, tardigrade fields, time vortexes, quantum decoherence and a fictional condition called 'molecular disequilibrium.'"

Ant-Man and the Wasp began principal photography on Aug. 1, 2017, at the same Georgia studios the first film had used. This time, the film's fake filming name was "Cherry Blue." The sets included what was, to date, Marvel's largest physical set: the laboratory and quantum tunnel. Returning to their roles were Paul Rudd, Evangeline Lilly, Michael Douglas, Abby Ryder Fortson, Michael Peña and many of the supporting actors from the first film. Newcomers this time around were Hannah John-Kamen as Ava Starr/Ghost, Laurence Fishburne as Bill Foster and Michelle Pfeiffer as Janet van Dyne. And Stan Lee made his usual cameo, of course, as a man whose car is accidentally shrunken.

The initial production wrapped on Nov. 19, 2017, before post-production and special effects work

> **"WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A FULLY REALIZED, VERY, VERY COMPLICATED HERO ... WHO HAPPENS TO BE A WOMAN."**
>
> **—PEYTON REED**

SHARP SUPERHEROINE
Lilly as the Wasp (above, far left) opposite Rudd's Ant-Man in a scene from *Ant-Man and the Wasp.*

FLYING FIGHTERS
The Wasp takes flight in formation alongside Ant-Man and one of his charges in a scene from the film (above).

"THERE IS SO MUCH MORE GOING ON IN THIS FILM THAT REPRESENTS FEMALE ENERGY."

—EVANGELINE LILLY

began in earnest. Effects again included macrophotography, de-aging sequences, CGI background elements for San Francisco shots that had not worked, blue-screen and green-screen compositing, 3D face replacements, phasing effects for the Ghost, a new look at the Quantum Realm and more. Visual Effects supervisor Andrew Hellen would later say, "We did a lot of research into macro- and cellular-level photography, and played with different ways to visualize quantum mechanics. It has a very magical quality, with a scientific edge. We also used glitching effects and macro lensing to ground the footage, and keep it from feeling too terrestrial."

Rudd was happy to add the Wasp as his co-star. "Ant-Man and the Wasp, we're a team," he said in 2018. "She is, in the first film, somebody who I think was probably so much better suited for the job than I was and finally has been given the wherewithal to be who she was born to be, which is a badass and the rightful heir to the throne."

Wearing a ponytail because she wanted her character to look a bit messy while fighting, Lilly also said in interviews that she was proud to remain feminine even while duking it out with villains. "There is so much more going on in this film that represents female energy, that represents female stories, that represents female struggle, and that represents female power. And what I have seen often in attempts at that in the past, when men have attempted to represent female power, what I recognize usually is masculine power portrayed through a woman. And in this film, I am very proud to say I recognize authentic female power in that it's

MASKED MARVELS
Ant-Man and the Wasp stand tall together in head-to-toe regalia in a still portrait from the movie (left).

WHITE OUT
Actress Hannah John-Kamen portrays Ghost, a molecularly unstable woman (above).

FEMININE FORCE
John-Kamen's Ghost (right, top) is one of several bad guys that Ant-Man and the Wasp must confront.

BIKE MOVES
John-Kamen did her own stunts for the movie (right), including riding a motorcycle during a high-speed chase.

FAMILY TIME
Scott Lang (Rudd, opposite) with his daughter, Cassie (Abby Ryder Fortson), in a scene from the movie.

> **"I WAS REALLY, REALLY HUNGRY TO BE A PART OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE."**
>
> **—LAURENCE FISHBURNE**

powerful to be vulnerable. It's powerful to be elegant. It's powerful to be graceful and nurturing and kind and forgiving and compassionate and generous and things that tend to be typically categorized as weaknesses and often are found in feminine beings."

At the age of 60, Michelle Pfeiffer was, to date, the most senior superheroine at Marvel. In a press interview to promote the film, Pfeiffer said, "I loved that this phase, let's say in my life, that I'm playing a superhero. I think it's incredible, and I think the message that it sends to women of all ages and all demographics is that we are still kicking ass and that we're strong."

CUTTING MOMENTS
The Wasp takes on knife-throwing villains (left) and shares a quiet moment with Ant-Man (left, bottom).

BATTLE TESTED
Oscar winner Michael Douglas (above) reprises his role as Hank Pym, the original Ant-Man.

Longtime comic book fan Fishburne joked in press interviews that "I was really, really hungry to be a part of the Marvel universe. I would have played an asteroid in any movie given the opportunity. The fact that they found that I was a good match for the character of Bill Foster, to me, it's... huge." Given Foster's own size-changing experiments with the Goliath project, it does seem as if he might have the opportunity to suit up in the future. As for working with director Reed, Fishburne said, "We both have a working understanding not only of movies, but also of comic books. And so, to be working on something where we put those two things together, things that we both love... there's a kind of natural ease and flow to working with each other."

Marvel released the first trailer for *Ant-Man and the Wasp* on Jan. 30, 2018, and details about the film soon trickled out to the public. Two years have passed since *Civil War*, and Scott Lang has been under house arrest, but after Hank Pym and Hope van Dyne open a tunnel to the Quantum Realm, Lang is able to help deliver a message from Janet van Dyne, thought to have died in 1987, but who instead has been trapped in the Realm at a subatomic level.

Before Pym and Hope can convince Lang to help them go to the Quantum Realm, a mysterious matter-phasing woman known as "Ghost" steals Pym's lab after he shrunk it to the size of a suitcase. The trio utilize the help of Bill Foster—an ex-partner of Pym's on the earlier project Goliath—to find Ghost. When they find her, she is dying, but she can be saved by Janet van Dyne's quantum energy if she is rescued... and the result might kill Janet. As time runs out, Henry must enter the Quantum Realm alone to help save his wife, while Ant-Man and the Wasp must face not only Ghost, but a cadre of black-market arms dealers.

What fans wouldn't find out until the theatrical debut of *Ant-Man and the Wasp* was that the mid-credit sequence would reveal a shocking and tragic fate for several of the film's characters... one that would tie directly into the end of Marvel's *Avengers: Infinity War*, released earlier in the year on April 27, 2018. As that film ended, Thanos snapped the fingers of his Infinity Gauntlet and disintegrated literally half of all known life in the universe. And that loss would erase almost everyone from the two Ant-Man films...

CHAPTER 5

THE LATEST BUZZ

The Ant-Man trilogy is about to wrap up, and the villains may be too big to conquer

OUT OF HAND
In *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*, the heroes take on Kang the Conquerer (Jonathan Majors).

VAN MAN
Paul Rudd as Scott Lang, Ant-Man's secret identity, in a scene from *Avengers: Endgame* (below).

FEARSOME FOURSOME
Giant-Man appears in *Endgame*, alongside fellow Avengers (from left) Hulk, Rocket and War Machine.

The worldwide box-office take of *Ant-Man and the Wasp* would eventually be more than $622.7 million, besting the first film. A third movie seemed all but certain, but fans would have to wait until the next year to find out what the Thanos snap meant for the *Ant-Man* family. Directed by Anthony and Joe Russo, *Avengers: Endgame* (previously known as *Avengers: Infinity War—Part 2*) had been a massive undertaking, filming back-to-back with its predecessor from August 2017 to January 2018.

In *Endgame*, five years have passed in a universe whose population has been cut in half, and in 2023, most everyone has learned to live with the unimaginable loss they experienced with Thanos' snap. But when Scott Lang escapes from the Quantum Realm, he explains to the Avengers that only five hours had passed for him there. Theorizing that the Quantum Realm allows for time travel, Lang, Bruce Banner (the Hulk), Steve Rogers (Captain America) and Tony Stark (Iron Man) soon embark on a time-travel adventure back to 2012 to reverse the actions of Thanos. Though the mission is not an easy success, they are eventually able to reverse Thanos' disintegrations and restore to life everyone who was wiped from existence. But then, Ant-Man and every other superhero on Earth—and many from space—must face an enraged Thanos and his invading army, who are now intent on ending all life in the universe and birthing it anew.

Many fans argued that, perhaps more than any other character besides Iron Man, Ant-Man was the heart and soul of the film. After all, if it hadn't been for him and his ideas, a way to defeat Thanos and restore the universe might never have happened. But, was Ant-Man really the hero, or was it the unnamed mouse that had accidentally brought Ant-Man back from the Quantum Realm? "Yes, the mouse saved the universe," the Russo brothers joked. "Among the many realities in those 14 million possible futures Doctor Strange foresees, the mouse failed to press the button and thus the heroes failed in those futures."

And what about those many realities and time travel? The Russos confirmed that "the Hulk is very explicit about what our rules are, which is you cannot change the present by altering the past. All you can do by going to the past—and for a character like Captain America] living in the past—is create an alternate future. So, this is a world in which alternate timelines exist... We spoke with a few physicists, and there are a lot of theories about how time travel could work. We chose the multiverse theory."

Perhaps inspired by Ant-Man's line in the film calling Captain America's rear "America's Ass," fans managed to come up with a posteriorly bizarre theory about how Ant-Man could have defeated Thanos by himself. The concept was that Ant-Man could shrink himself, crawl into Thanos' butt and then grow to a massive size, thus exploding the mad Titan into a million purple chunks from within. The theory-turned-meme became known as the "Thanus Theory," and the directors were asked about it on the film's press tour. "Well, somebody blew the ending of the movie, obviously," quipped Joe Russo. Star Paul

MANY FANS ARGUED THAT, PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER CHARACTER BESIDES IRON MAN, ANT-MAN WAS THE HEART AND SOUL OF THE FILM.

NEW KID
Actress Emma Fuhrmann (Cassie Lang, above) at the world premiere of *Avengers: Endgame* in L.A. in 2019.

TEAM MEMBER
A suited-up and ready Rudd in Ant-Man's character poster for 2019's *Avengers: Endgame*.

Rudd was a bit more questioning on *The Graham Norton Show*, asking: "Why not the ear or the nose? Why does it have to be...?" Asked about it by nearly every news outlet, Rudd said elsewhere, "If there's one thing we learned from *Infinity War*, it's that Thanos can take a lot of punishment."

Besides his new heroic stature, the other big change for Ant-Man in *Avengers: Endgame* was that his daughter, Cassie, had not disappeared in Thanos' snap. And so, while she had been around 11 in the second film, she was 16 by the time of *Endgame*. This required Marvel to recast the role, which it did with Emma Fuhrmann, a 17-year-old actress. In a 2019 interview, Fuhrmann recalled that she was sitting in the makeup trailer when her co-star came in. "Paul came in later to the trailer... and he's literally sitting right next to me, and I'm like, 'Should I introduce myself?... I have to say something, this is getting weird.' And then he's like [leans over], 'Are you my daughter?' And so that's how we met."

Fuhrmann also did her research. "The second I heard the name Cassie Lang for the first time when I got the role, I was trying to figure out her backstory and I watched *Ant-Man*. I learned all about her heart and how she had to have Pym Particles put in her to continue to live, and how she becomes Stature and Stinger."

Avengers: Endgame had its world premiere on April 22, 2019, at the Los Angeles Convention Center, and opened worldwide within the next week. It would go on to earn a total of $2.8 billion, making it the highest-grossing film of all time to that date. *Deadline* would later list its final net profit as $890 million.

Marvel's massive Phase Three would wrap up in 2019 with *Spider-Man: Far From Home*, which Marvel president Kevin Feige said was the end to the 23-movie three-phase Infinity Saga. Marvel's Phase Four, encompassing films and television series in 2021 and '22, began a new three-phase story line called the Multiverse Saga. And while none of the Ant-Man characters overtly appeared in any Phase Four projects, there were hints and bread crumbs thrown out for the fans.

During the 2021 *Hawkeye* television series, a Broadway show called *Rogers: The Musical* was showcased, in which Ant-Man was posited—incorrectly—as a founding member of the Avengers. Singing and dancing for scenes such as the song "Save the City," young Broadway actor Nico DeJesus portrayed Ant-Man. Songwriter Marc Shaiman noted in an interview that Ant-Man's inclusion reflected Marvel's "perfect kind of humor. Whenever there's a movie or a musical or something, there's always something that's a little wrong, or the truth is stretched. Or someone on the creative team was like, 'I wish Ant-Man was in this!' So, there it was..."

One September 2021 episode of the animated Marvel television series *What If...?* found Paul Rudd and Evangeline Lilly vocally reprising their roles for an alternate universe in which a zombie virus from the Quantum Realm is unleashed on the world. In

MARVEL STUDIOS
ANT-MAN AND THE WASP
QUANTUMANIA

the 2022 *Ms. Marvel* series, Ant-Man merchandise and an exhibit are visible at the fictional New Jersey AvengerCon, where the title heroine first used her powers. And in the newer *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law,* viewers learned that "Find Ant-Man" was one of the most searched threads on the internet. But perhaps the most interesting touchstone to Ant-Man was the one that was set up without fans even realizing it at the time. In the 2021 *Loki* television series, Jonathan Majors was cast as "He Who Remains," the creator of the Time Variance Authority and survivor of a multiversal war. Majors would soon become an important player in Ant-Man's future.

Of course, behind the scenes, work had already been proceeding on *Ant-Man 3,* even if nobody knew yet when it would be set, or what it would be called. By November 2019, Peyton Reed was signed to direct, and Rudd, Douglas and Lilly were set to return. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was unclear when filming could start, but screenwriter Jeff Loveness, a writer on Cartoon network's fan favorite *Rick and Morty,* was advancing the script by May 2020.

"We are working away through the pandemic," Reed said on a SiriusXM radio interview. "There's some really, really, really exciting things in store… I think the third Ant-Man movie is going to be a much bigger, more sprawling movie than the first two. It's going to have a very different visual template."

Prior to ever appearing on *Loki,* Jonathan Majors was cast in a lead role in *Ant-Man 3,* and leaks to the press identified the character he would portray as supervillain Kang the Conqueror, a time traveler and multiversal bad guy. On Disney Investor Day, held on Dec. 10, 2020, more news about *Ant-Man 3* was finally released. Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige spoke, saying: "Director Peyton Reed is hard at work with our Marvel Studios team on the third Ant-Man film, which will officially be called *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*. Paul Rudd, Evangeline Lilly, Michael Douglas and Michelle Pfeiffer are all returning. And Kathryn Newton is joining the cast and playing Cassie Lang. And in the role of Kang the Conqueror, we have a great actor, Jonathan Majors."

The news of recasting Cassie was a surprise to fans, who had assumed that the emotionally effective Emma Fuhrmann would reprise the role from *Endgame*. No word has leaked as to why the replacement was made, but Fuhrmann did say in a social media post, "I was as sad as you all were to hear the news Thursday. I can only hope that this means there is something else for me in the future of the MCU. I will always be grateful to have been a part of the MCU & the biggest movie of all time. Being an actress is still my #1 passion & I look forward to what the future holds." The recasting wasn't an unusual move for Marvel, who had already replaced Edward Norton with Mark Ruffalo as Hulk, and Terrence Howard with Don Cheadle as War Machine.

Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania began principal photography on July 26, 2021, at England's Pinewood Studios, under the fake name of "Dust Bunny." Director Reed tweeted out an odd photo of a red-eyed vampire rabbit sitting next to a biohazard container to showcase Day One, calling back to the ugly birthday gift Scott Lang had given Cassie in the first film.

In May 2021, Marvel released a mega-trailer titled "Marvel Studios Celebrates the Movies" to welcome fans back to theaters after the pandemic shutdowns. It promised opening dates for films including *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, *Black Widow*, *The Marvels*, *Quantumania* and *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3*.

Release dates were changed after some 50 crew members at Pinewood contracted norovirus in

> **"NOW I'VE AT LEAST TRIED OUT WHAT IT'S LIKE TO SHOOT A MARVEL MOVIE."**
> **—BILL MURRAY**

THEATER GROUP
Jonathan Majors (far left), Evangeline Lilly and Rudd join Marvel president Kevin Feige at a Disney fan event.

September—but the films were on their way. Very few early leaks got out about the plot to *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*, but it was hard to keep the casting quiet. First came news that Corey Stoll would seemingly return to his role as Darren Cross/Yellowjacket. Although he had last been seen shrinking uncontrollably in *Ant-Man*, as fans now knew, shrinking uncontrollably inevitably led not to death, but instead to the Quantum Realm. Combine that with Evangeline Lilly tagging Stoll in an Instagram post with *Quantumania*'s script cover in it—and then quickly deleting it—and a Yellowjacket helmet showing up on *Loki*... and fans considered Stoll a lock to return, somehow.

In October, actor Bill Murray revealed to a German magazine that he had shot scenes for a Marvel movie with Peyton Reed, although he tried to obfuscate which movie. "Some people were quite surprised why I decided on such a project. But for me the thing was quite clear: I got to know the director—and really liked him very much. He was funny, humble, everything you want from a director.... So, I agreed, although I'm not interested in these huge comic book adaptations as an actor otherwise... Let's put it this way: The director is a good guy, and now I've at least tried out what it's like to shoot a Marvel movie... But I don't think I need that experience a second time."

At Comic-Con International's famed Hall H on July 23, 2022, Marvel held a panel to announce Phase Five and Phase Six of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Attending was *Quantumania* director Reed, who introduced stars Kathryn Newton, Evangeline Lilly, Paul Rudd and Jonathan Majors. Fans learned that *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* would be the first film of Phase Five, and that although he would be introduced as Kang in this film, Majors would endanger the MCU as a whole through Phase Six in two more Avengers movies.

A special trailer was shown only to attendees—though it would later leak online—which revealed bits of the plot. After Janet van Dyne issues a dire warning, Scott Lang, Cassie, Hope, Hank Pym and Janet are sucked into the Quantum Realm. There,

"WE REALLY WANTED TO TAKE A HARD LEFT TURN AND MAKE A MOVIE THAT WAS EVEN MORE EPIC."

—PEYTON REED

BLUE STEEL
Jonathan Majors as Kang the Conquerer in a scene from *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* (near right).

CLOAK AND DARKER
From far right, Pfeiffer (Janet van Dyne), Lilly and Douglas (Hank Pym) in a scene from *Quantumania*.

they meet Bill Murray's character, who tells Janet he thought she was dead. Janet begins to reveal a deep secret, Cassie is taken captive and the cybernetic face of a Marvel villain known as M.O.D.O.K. leers out of the screen.

Over the action sequences, the voice of Kang the Conqueror says, "Time isn't what you think... If you want to get out of here, I am the only shot you have." When Ant-Man tells Kang that he's made a mistake because he's an Avenger, Kang chillingly pauses to reflect. "You're an Avenger? Have I killed you before? They all blur together after a while."

Before the trailer, Reed said about the film: "We finally get to spend some time in the Quantum Realm. We have a lot in store for these characters in this movie, and we're going to meet a lot of new characters in this movie and explore the Quantum Realm, which is not always what you think it is, so we're really, really excited to finally bring it to life." Rudd updated fans on Scott Lang's life, saying, "Scott is pretty pleased with himself and his role in saving the universe... He's been busy at work (ish), with a little book."

As for the Wasp, Lilly said, "What's really fun about having her onscreen in the suit for the second film is that the first film was all about how powerful and capable and formidable she is. Now we get to explore her vulnerabilities and her fragilities and the ways that she has to face those things... I think being a powerful woman is only impressive if you do it against very powerful odds."

In later interviews, Reed added, "We really wanted to take a hard left turn and make a movie that was even more epic, but still progress the story of these family dynamics and everything that's going on between Scott and Hope and Cassie. Cassie is now 18 years old and maybe Scott doesn't quite know how to relate to her as an adult because he lost those five years because of the events of *Endgame*. And we also knew that we wanted to put our heroes up against a very, very formidable opponent... To be able to put up our heroes against Kang the Conqueror was a huge thing for us. We went big and we also went small."

Kathryn Newton's super suit is shown in the proto-trailer footage, which allowed her some leeway with secret-sensitive Marvel in talking about it to the press. "The first time I walked into my fitting I saw this black leather suit and purple leather and these sparkly, metallicy Converse, and I was like, 'No way! That's for me?' And purple was my favorite color growing up… Putting it on the first time, it fit perfect." Whether she adopts the name Stature in the film, as she does in Marvel's *Young Avengers* comics, has yet to be revealed.

Going to the Quantum Realm herself for the first time is a different journey for Hope van Dyne in *Quantumania*, given that her mother was trapped there for most of Hope's life. At Comic-Con, Lilly said: "That is a significant story point for Hope in this film. It definitely brings up a lot of emotion for Hope, knowing that she'd lost her mother for so long to this place, and that she really doesn't know anything about it. It's a beautiful question that drives to the heart of Hope's struggle and vulnerability in the film."

There has been controversy surrounding Bill Murray's appearance in the film's trailer. In April 2022, production was suspended on his film *Being Mortal* due to a complaint against the actor. In October, a flood of allegations of inappropriate conduct on the set of various projects throughout his career surfaced. Regardless of what happens with his casting, it's clear that fans are eager to see more.

Rudd says he has been touched by how much Ant-Man has meant to people. "What this has become is unique, and to be a part of it is a bit surreal, but it's really exciting and it's gratifying in many ways. No matter what country I go to, or who I'm meeting, whatever the age, people have a connection, they know about these characters and these series of films. That's a pretty cool place to be… The comic books, the characters, kids have grown up with them, and their parents have grown up with these same characters and their parents grew up with these characters. They're archetypical. So many of them represent what we all strive to be, or want to be in our own lives, and yet they are also flawed and human in ways, and we relate to that and connect to that… They're superhuman and heroic, yet still relatable. I think that strikes a chord with a lot of people."

"WHAT THIS HAS BECOME IS UNIQUE."

—PAUL RUDD

As *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* was preparing to hit theaters, Peyton Reed looked back, saying: "When we were doing the original *Ant-Man*—it came out in 2015—if you had told us we were going to be able to do an Ant-Man trilogy, I don't know if we would have believed you. But here we are, and we have done an Ant-Man trilogy, which for me, is a personal thrill, because when we made the first one, we had ideas of where we thought the series might go, and we've actually been able to do it. And we've been able to do it at Marvel and have all the resources at our disposal to sort of go nuts."

Soon fans will know the answer to a question that's been lingering since Comic-Con: Will Ant-Man and the Wasp survive against Kang and whatever other horrors the Quantum Realm has in store?

FACE TIME
Rudd (left) has taken Scott Lang a long way since he first donned the Ant-Man suit in 2015.

WASP WAITING
Pfeiffer as Janet van Dyne in a scene from *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* (above).

CHAPTER 6

THE QUANTUM REALM 101

What every fan needs to know

SPACE RACE
The MCU not only has Ant-Man and the Wasp zooming through the heavens, but also across time and into new dimensions.

CHAPTER 6

One of the funniest lines of *Ant-Man and the Wasp* is when Scott Lang asks Bill Foster, "Do you just put *quantum* in front of everything?" After all, the movie uses the word to describe quantum phasing, quantum spectrometer, quantum anomaly, quantum research, quantum entanglement, quantum states, quantum technology, quantum energy, quantum system, quantum healing particles, quantum tunnel, quantum void and of course, Quantum Realm. Even those with science degrees might agree with Lang's question, but understanding what it means is the crux of *Quantumania*.

And, oh yeah, a lot of this stuff is real.

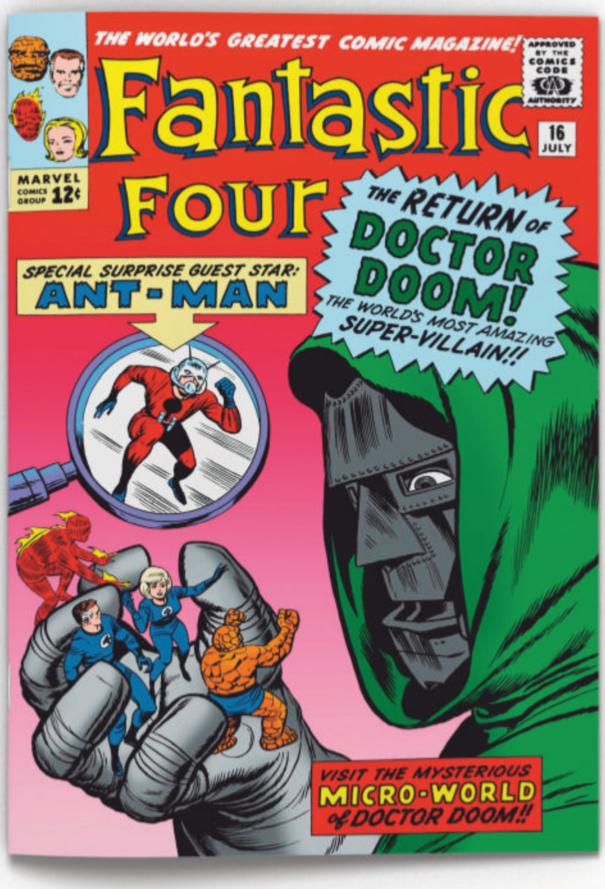
Quantum physics is the study of things that are very small, like particles and atoms. The study of quantum physics has existed since the early 20th century, and cannot be separated from most forms of science today, whether you're talking about computer memory or cellphones, medical devices or refrigerator magnets. The development began with the idea that quantum mechanics might explain how light and matter behave differently on the atomic level… often in ways that seemed to defy the rules of classical physics. Professor Jonathan Dowling, of the

THE SCIENCE OF THE ANT-MAN TRILOGY … IS DEFINITELY BASED ON REAL THEORETICAL PHYSICS.

BOLDLY GOING
Flying through the Quantum Realm in a still from a scene in 2018's *Ant-Man and the Wasp*.

Louisiana State University Department of Physics & Astronomy, has said that “we are currently in the midst of a second quantum revolution. The first quantum revolution gave us new rules that govern physical reality. The second quantum revolution will take these rules and use them to develop new technologies.” Said plainly: The science of the Ant-Man trilogy, though the stuff of superhero movies, is definitely based on real theoretical physics.

The Quantum Realm of the MCU is actually a combination of elements from Marvel comics. In 1943’s *Captain America Comics* Nos. 25-26 (April and May 1943), science fiction author Ray Cummings adapted an earlier pulp story he’d written for an adventure in which Captain America and Bucky end up traveling to a subatomic world within an atom. In July 1963’s *Fantastic Four* No. 16, Ant-Man aided the Fantastic Four in a battle against Doctor Doom, who had shrunken himself into another realm known as the Micro-World or Sub-Atomica. Other Marvel characters visited the subatomic realm over the years, including the Hulk.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EARLY FORAYS
In 1963, Ant-Man and the Fantastic Four pursued Dr. Doom into the subatomic Micro-World (above).

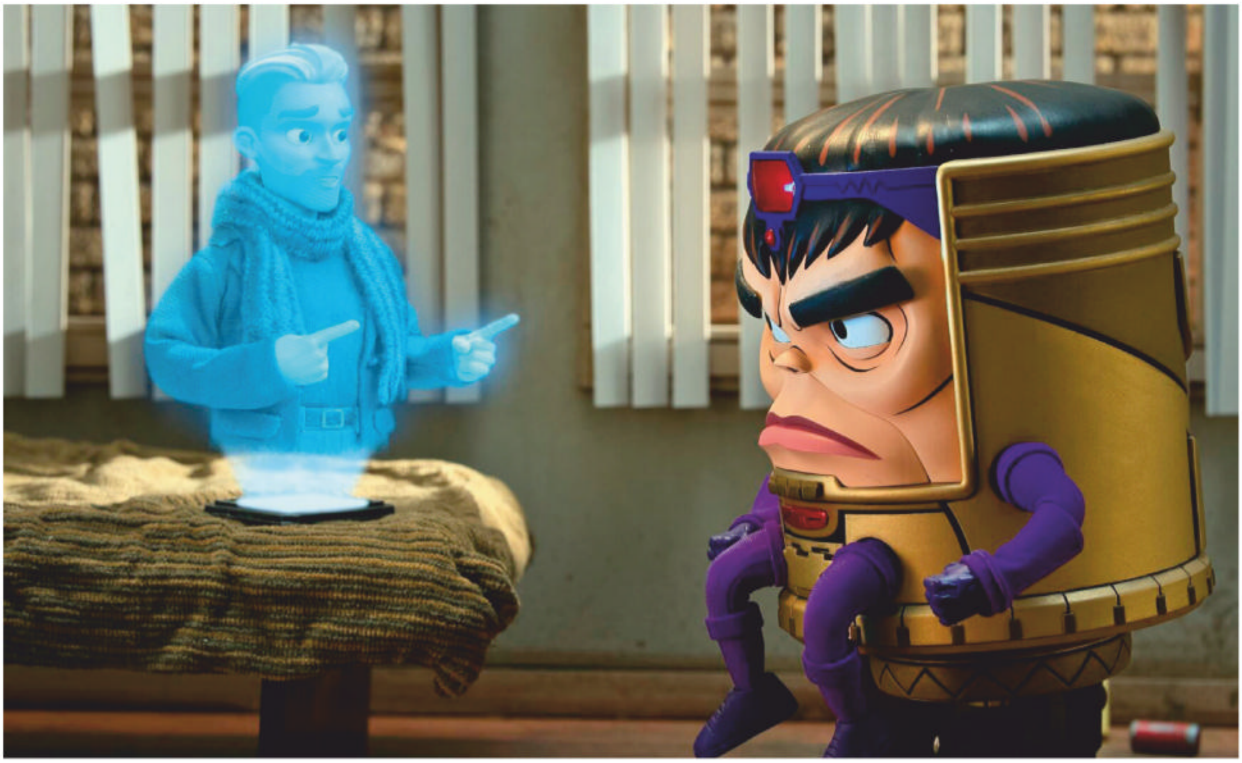
HEAD GAMES
MODOK has appeared in many places, including on the Hulu comedy series *M.O.D.O.K.* (right).

In 1979, Marvel licensed a toy line from Mego Corporation, and began publishing a successful related series called *Micronauts*. In that series, which often crossed over into the Marvel comic universe, the name Microverse was first used for the subatomic realm. Later, beginning in 1991, Marvel also used the term “quantum zone” to denote a realm of powerful energy.

When Marvel decided to incorporate the Microverse into the Cinematic Universe, they were stuck; the name originally belonged to Mego, not to Marvel. As noted previously, Marvel asked Caltech mathematical physicist Spyridon “Spiros” Michalakis for a good solution, and he gave them the name “Quantum Realm.” Michalakis explained what he qualified as the Quantum Realm in a 2018 essay: “The Quantum Realm is a place where almost everything is possible. If you know how to navigate it by mastering quantum entanglement... you can engineer reality to manifest itself to your liking... Space and Time are dimensions that emerge from a soup of pure possibilities, the Quantum Realm. The laws of physics themselves are merely suggestions within the Quantum Realm, only taking a more definite form as we ‘zoom out’ from that place of infinite possibilities, to find ourselves in the macroscopic world we call home.”

In simpler terms, the MCU’s Quantum Realm is a universe within the atomic realm, where life and civilizations exist in ways that defy physics as humanity thinks of them. Time travel is possible in the Quantum Realm. Magic is possible in the Quantum Realm. And as we have seen glimpses of in the Marvel Cinematic Universe so far—and the Ant-Man films in particular—danger definitely exists in the Quantum Realm.

One of those existing dangers is MODOK (or



M.O.D.O.K.), a creepy villain who appears to be a giant head with tiny atrophied legs and arms and a cybernetic body because... well, because that's exactly what he is. M.O.D.O.K. is an acronym for Mental Organism Designed Only for Killing, and he first appeared in *Tales of Suspense* Nos. 93–94 (September and October 1967), fighting against Captain America. He began as a technician working for the villainous organization A.I.M. (Advanced Idea Mechanics), but when he was mutated, his massive cranium and frail body had to be housed in a hovering life-supporting device known as the "Doomsday Chair."

Over the more than 50 years since he first appeared, MODOK has battled Captain America, Namor the Sub-Mariner, Doctor Doom, Hulk, the Defenders, Falcon, Deadpool, Squirrel Girl, Ms. Marvel, the Fantastic Four and many others. He has also nearly gotten married, had a female counterpart with Ms. M.O.D.O.K., been killed and revived, and much more. He also appeared in a different form during the fourth and fifth seasons of Marvel's *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* television series, when actor Zach McGowan played an arms dealer-turned series of L-MODOKs (Life-MOdel Decoys Designed Only for Killing). And Patton Oswalt voiced the character for 10 episodes of Marvel's stop-motion animated *M.O.D.O.K.* comedy series for the Hulu streaming service in the spring of 2021.

Through almost every appearance, MODOK and his giant head have been the subject of many jokes, so his appearance in *Quantumania* might be a perfect fit for a series built around humor. But fans theorize that there is a different reason for MODOK's role in the film. Noting that Corey Stoll's Yellowjacket began uncontrollably shrinking in the first Ant-Man film, and knowing that such shrinkage would eventually lead him to the Quantum Realm, once the leaks had revealed that Stoll would reappear in Quantumania, fans speculated that Yellowjacket would become MODOK.

The largest question for *Quantumania* remains how the introduction of Kang will affect the Marvel Cinematic Universe. After all, Jonathan Majors had already appeared as "He Who Remains" in the Disney+ series *Loki*, but his fate there unleashed a multiverse of unpredictable timelines.... and an infinite number of versions of himself, intent on starting a multiversal war. As the *Loki* series ended, fans saw

UNSTOPPABLE EVIL
After making an earlier appearance under another name, Kang debuted for real in September 1964.

their first glimpse of Kang in statue form.

Kang was introduced in *Fantastic Four* No. 19 (October 1963), initially as a 31st-century time-traveler named Nathaniel Richards, who went back to ancient Egypt to become the ruler Pharaoh Rama-Tut. In *The Avengers* No. 8 (September 1964), the character reappeared, calling himself Kang. Over the years, Kang would return again and again, bedeviling Marvel's heroes under guises such as the Scarlet Centurion and Immortus. Protected by enhanced battle armor, and possessing genius-level intellect, Kang's access to 40th-century technology and time travel made him one of Marvel's most powerful villains. The fact that his interruptions to the time stream had created alternate Kangs from different timelines meant that there was no way to fully defeat him.

When creating the first MCU version of Kang for *Loki*, series head writer Michael Waldron said, "We knew that we wanted this show to be huge, and we wanted it to really end with a bang and have a huge impact on the MCU moving forward. Knowing that Kang was probably going to be the next big cross-movie villain, and because he is a time-traveling, multiversal adversary, it just always made so much sense. I came up with that big multiversal war mythology and pitched it out in the room one day to our producers. And they said, 'Yeah, let's go for it.' We knew we were going to end up meeting the man behind the curtain. And then it was just on us to make sure that that meeting really delivered."

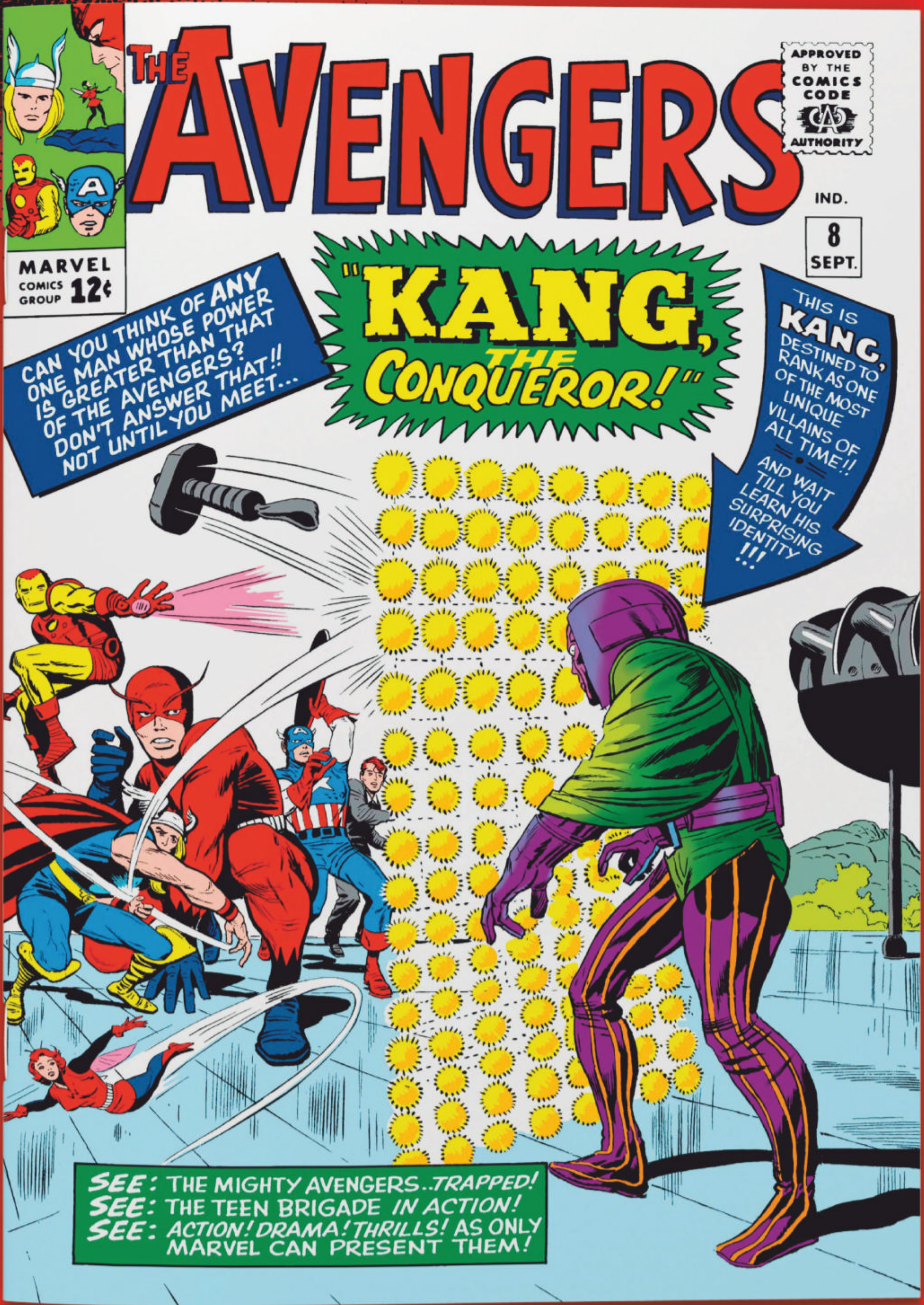
THE LARGEST QUESTION FOR *QUANTUMANIA* IS HOW THE INTRODUCTION OF KANG WILL AFFECT THE MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE.

But, as hinted in that episode, He Who Remains may not be the villain that Kang is/was/will be. Waldron, who co-wrote that script, said, "You had to leave a lot of meat on the bone in terms of how evil he could be, because that's He Who Remains' whole thing, that it's not me who you should be afraid of. 'It's the other versions of me that are going to come.' It was trying to really hint at that terrifying evil within without going all the way there." Waldron tried to write him as a "very charismatic sociopath," and was elated when Jonathan Majors signed on for the role. "Such an astounding actor... You had to write him in a way that he felt worthy of being the villain at the end of our show."

The episode's director, Kate Herron, recently talked about the casting of Majors, saying that the *Quantumania* casting was done at the same time as the *Loki* casting, with herself, Peyton Reed, Kevin Feige and others at Marvel all in on the decision. "Casting was a very surreal experience. When I joined the project, we always knew that Loki and Sylvie were going to go to He Who Remains, and the multiverse would be released. So, I already knew when I got the job that it was going to be a massive undertaking to do that and a big responsibility for Marvel to get it right. And Jonathan Majors is an actor that we were all just blown away by; I think everyone who knows his work is blown away by him. And when I knew we had Jonathan, he and I were solely focused on He Who Remains and this version of the character, this variant."

Herron also clarified the version of Kang that He Who Remains isn't. "He Who Remains is in the comics, but the version in our show was very different. He's closer to Immortus, but he's a unique character for our story. But Kang is a variant of that character."

In the Disney+ behind-the-scenes series *Marvel Studios Assembled*, Majors expounded on how he approached the role of He Who Remains, and what it meant for the Kang to come. He compared the character to the Wizard of Oz and Willy Wonka, saying that he was "the archetype of the wizard and what happens to him when he gets bored and


THE AVENGERS
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SEPT.
MARVEL COMICS GROUP 12¢
CAN YOU THINK OF ANY ONE MAN WHOSE POWER IS GREATER THAN THAT OF THE AVENGERS? DON'T ANSWER THAT!! NOT UNTIL YOU MEET...
"KANG, THE CONQUEROR!"
THIS IS KANG, DESTINED TO RANK AS ONE OF THE MOST UNIQUE VILLAINS OF ALL TIME!! AND WAIT TILL YOU LEARN HIS SURPRISING IDENTITY!!!
SEE: THE MIGHTY AVENGERS..TRAPPED!
SEE: THE TEEN BRIGADE IN ACTION!
SEE: ACTION! DRAMA! THRILLS! AS ONLY MARVEL CAN PRESENT THEM!

“JONATHAN MAJORS IS AN ACTOR THAT WE WERE ALL JUST BLOWN AWAY BY.”

—KATE HERRON

TIME STAMPED
For his He Who Remains costume (near right), Majors wore clothing from different places and eras.

NOT SITTING STILL
He Who Remains (far right) exists in so many different times that he is impossible to fully defeat.

becomes a trickster. I think when we meet He Who Remains he’s on the borderline of those two things. You don’t really know where he’s at and I think the ambiguity of that is one of the wicked things about it.”

Majors loved his costume, which shared colors and tones not only from his comic book counterpart, but also various real time periods. “He Who Remains has lived forever. One of the great things I got to experience with our costume designer is that every piece we decided was from a different place. The cape I had on was from the Victorian era. The shoes were from Genghis Khan. The pants from Mongolia, etc. You just mix and match it together and it informs the character.”

Actor Tom Hiddleston, who has portrayed Loki in not only the Thor and Avengers movies, but also in the Loki television series, had kind words to say about Majors. “Jonathan Majors came into this production in our final week, and has created something, I think, that will be talked about for a long period of time… The variant of He Who Remains, the one he’s been talking about, the one that he’s so afraid of… is Kang. Kang is bent on destruction, and I’m so curious to see what Jonathan does in the future.” In the Disney+ special, co-executive producer Kevin R. Wright added a hint for Kang’s future, saying, “You could feel the energy on the set, because I think the crew knew we’re watching the flowering of the next phase of the Marvel Universe.”

Indeed, Phase Five and Phase Six of the Marvel Cinematic Universe were announced by Marvel on July 23, 2022, at Comic-Con International. In addition to utilizing Majors as Kang in *Quantumania*, Marvel revealed that Kang would endanger the MCU through both phases, culminating in *Avengers: The Kang Dynasty* on May 2, 2025, and *Avengers: Secret Wars* on November 7, 2025. Not even Thanos received quite the build-up of Kang. Scripting *The Kang Dynasty* will be *Quantumania*’s writer, Jeff Loveness, while *Loki*’s Michael Waldron will script *Secret Wars*.

“Kang is big and Kang is bad… In *Ant-Man*, there

will be conquering, because he is Kang the Conqueror," Majors told a reporter after the Comic-Con event. A few months later, a waitress served Majors at a restaurant and tweeted that he had a picture of himself as Kang on his phone's lock screen. The actor defended himself on *Jimmy Kimmel*, showing the phone and specifying, "it's for inspiration… It's Kang from the comic!"

In October 2022, when director Destin Daniel Cretton confirmed he was the director of *The Kang Dynasty* —the first film with Kang's name in the title—Majors told *Variety*: "We spoke for a very long time. He has an open mind, he has an open heart, and he's grounded… I think that's the most important part about it. We're dealing with myths. What is a Kang?… What is an MCU movie?… Those are the questions they're asking, but all of that works when it's grounded, and really, really tucked into the given circumstances, what's going on between these people, and what we can illuminate for ourselves as a species."

For his films, including the role of Kang, Majors put on an extra 10 pounds of muscle and lowered his body fat to 5%, in an effort to look as ripped as possible. His conditioning coach, Jamie Sawyer, said in a 2022 interview, "He is the warrior version of Kang, so there was a focus on what that warrior would look like who's been around through the ages and has developed every type of combat skill. It was about making him look like an imposing figure."

There is one version of Kang that has yet to be discussed publicly by anyone at Marvel, although fans are expecting the character to show up soon. *Young Avengers* No. 1 was released by Marvel Comics in April 2005, collecting "legacy" versions of other characters into a younger team. They included: Patriot, a young man who had received the Super-Soldier serum like Captain America; Wiccan and Speed, the two sons of the Scarlet Witch and Vision; Stature, also known as Cassie Lang, the daughter of Ant-Man; a female Hawkeye, whose real name was Kate Bishop, a teenage protégé of the archer; Hulkling, a shape-shifting son of a Kree and a Skrull; and the mysterious Iron Lad, who is eventually revealed to be Nathaniel Richards... the man who will one day become Kang.

What's it all mean? Again, reality might offer some clues. The reality of franchise movies in Hollywood is that as stars become more famous, their paychecks become larger. Additionally, the long process of making films and even a TV series means that the stars age. Rather than rebooting with different actors, as the James Bond series has done, the Marvel Cinematic Universe seems destined to reboot with younger versions of legacy characters—perhaps even in the near future. After all, Scarlet Witch and Vision's two magical sons have already appeared in the *WandaVision* Disney+ series and in *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness,* Cassie Lang has appeared in the first three Ant-Man films, and Kate Bishop first appeared in the *Hawkeye* Disney+ series. There's also the random teen who appeared at Tony Stark's funeral in *Avengers: Endgame*, after helping Tony fix his suit in *Iron Man 3*... and whom fans are positive is not a random character. And now, Kang has arrived, with multiple variants throughout time and the multiverse.

Kathryn Newton, the actress who portrays Cassie Lang in *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*, was asked by a reporter in 2022 whether Cassie Lang and Kate Bishop might herald a *Young Avengers* debut. "In the comics, they're friends... I would love that. The other thing that's really interesting is Iron Lad is also Kang... is also Jonathan... I think he's going to be the most incredible villain for the Marvel Universe! And I want to fight him!" If theories are correct, Cassie will definitely get her chance.

But as fans look to the future of the Marvel Cinematic Universe—and how the Quantum Realm, time travel and Kang the Conqueror will affect it—it is important to look back at the foundation of the MCU... and the tapestry that might very well be unwoven in the time to come.

FUTURE STAR
Ant-Man's daughter, Cassie Lang (Kathryn Newton, far right), becomes Stature in *Quantumania.*

CHAPTER 7

INFINITY'S END

The first three phases of the MCU—collectively called “The Infinity Saga”—are complete, laying the foundation for what is to follow

BIG CAST, BIG BUCKS
Avengers: Endgame earned nearly $3 billion, and was, for a while, the highest-grossing movie of all time.

No one ever said keeping up with the Marvel Cinematic Universe wasn't a commitment. So far there have been 30 films, plus television series and specials, that interconnect in ways big and small. If you've skipped an episode or two—or three or five—all is not lost. Here is a summary of some the MCU's key vehicles and plot points.

PHASE 1

1 / IRON MAN

U.S. Release Date: May 2, 2008

Director: Jon Favreau

Starring: Robert Downey Jr. (Tony Stark/Iron Man), Terrence Howard (Lt. Colonel James Rhodes), Jeff Bridges (Obadiah Stane), Gwyneth Paltrow (Pepper Potts), Jon Favreau (Happy Hogan), Clark Gregg (Phil Coulson, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.)

Plot: The first Marvel Studios film, *Iron Man* showcased the origin story of the hero as he was captured by terrorists and developed a mechanized suit of armor. The film grounded Stark Industries as one of the defense contractor power players of the MCU.

End Scenes: Tony gets a surprise visit from S.H.I.E.L.D. director Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson), who wants to discuss a project called the "Avengers Initiative," because Iron Man isn't the only superhero in the world.

PHASE 1

2 / THE INCREDIBLE HULK

U.S. Release Date: June 13, 2008

Director: Louis Leterrier

Starring: Edward Norton (Dr. Bruce Banner/Hulk), William Hurt (General Thaddeus "Thunderbolt" Ross), Liv Tyler (Betty Ross), Tim Roth (Emil Blonsky/Abomination)

Plot: When the government experiments with ways to protect soldiers from gamma radiation, scientist Bruce Banner is exposed to the radiation, and—when fearful, hurt or angry—he transforms into a super-strong, green monster. Banner becomes a fugitive from the government, searching for ways to cure himself, even as they send another monster after him.

End Scenes: Tony Stark approaches Thunderbolt Ross to discuss a team of heroes he is assembling.

PHASE 1

3 / IRON MAN 2

U.S. Release Date: May 7, 2010

Director: Jon Favreau

Starring: Robert Downey Jr. (Iron Man), Don Cheadle (Lt. Colonel James Rhodes/War Machine), Scarlett Johansson (Black Widow), Gwyneth Paltrow (Pepper Potts), Jon Favreau (Happy Hogan), Samuel L. Jackson (Nick Fury), Sam Rockwell (Justin Hammer), Mickey Rourke (Whiplash)

Plot: The U.S. government wants Stark's Iron Man technology, but he refuses to turn it over to them. His friend Rhodey "confiscates" a prototype suit of Stark armor and becomes War Machine. And two Russians come calling: one a spy known as Black Widow, and the other an ex-convict physicist out for revenge on the Stark family.

End Scenes: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. Phil Coulson finds a magical hammer in a crater in New Mexico.

PHASE 1

4 / THOR

U.S. Release Date: May 6, 2011

Director: Kenneth Branagh

Starring: Chris Hemsworth (Thor), Natalie Portman (Jane Foster), Tom Hiddleston (Loki), Anthony Hopkins (Odin), Jaimie Alexander (Sif), Idris Elba (Heimdall), Colm Feore (Laufey), Jeremy Renner (Hawkeye)

Plot: Marvel's first film to introduce mythology focused on the power struggle between Thor and his adopted brother. Due to Thor's arrogance, his father, Odin, strips his powers and sends him to Earth as a mortal. Meanwhile, scheming Loki betrays Odin to take control of Asgard, and Loki's Frost Giant biological father threatens the Norse realm.

End Scenes: A scientist is asked by Nick Fury to study a powerful energy cube, but Fury doesn't know that Loki is controlling the scientist.

PHASE 1

5 / CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE FIRST AVENGER

U.S. Release Date: July 22, 2011

Director: Joe Johnston

Starring: Chris Evans (Steve Rogers/Captain America), Hayley Atwell (Peggy Carter), Hugo Weaving (Red Skull), Sebastian Stan (Bucky Barnes)

Plot: Rejected to enlist in the military during World War II, Steve Rogers volunteers to be part of an experimental "Super Soldier" program. He gains tremendous strength and other skills, and soon leads attacks against the Red Skull and agents of the villainous group Hydra. Along the way, the energy cube, now called the Tesseract, is unleashed, and Captain America is frozen in suspended animation, only to wake up in the present day.

End Scenes: Nick Fury approaches Captain America and asks for his help on a mission.

PHASE 1

6 / THE AVENGERS

U.S. Release Date: May 4, 2012

Director: Joss Whedon

Starring: Robert Downey Jr. (Iron Man), Chris Evans (Captain America), Mark Ruffalo (Hulk), Chris Hemsworth (Thor), Scarlett Johansson (Black Widow), Jeremy Renner (Hawkeye), Tom Hiddleston (Loki), Clark Gregg (Phil Coulson) and Samuel L. Jackson (Nick Fury)

Plot: Loki makes a pact with the alien species Chitauri to conquer Earth in exchange for the Tesseract, and Nick Fury's team of superheroes is finally assembled, as the Avengers. Much of New York City is damaged.

End Scenes: The leader of the Chitauri forces tells his mysterious master (Thanos) about Loki's failure, and that attacking the Avengers would be courting death. Also, the Avengers eat shawarma.

PHASE 2

7 / IRON MAN 3

U.S. Release Date: May 3, 2013

Director: Shane Black

Starring: Robert Downey Jr. (Iron Man), Don Cheadle (Iron Patriot), Gwyneth Paltrow (Pepper Potts), Jon Favreau (Happy Hogan), Guy Pearce (Aldrich Killian), Ben Kingsley (The Mandarin), Ty Simpkins (Harley Keener)

Plot: Attacked by terrorists, Iron Man is thought to be dead, but he recovers and repairs his armor with the help of a teenage boy named Harley Keener. To fight the Mandarin and the Extremis virus, Tony must also get help from War Machine—now renamed Iron Patriot—and an Extremis-infected Pepper Potts.

End Scenes: Tony Stark bores Bruce Banner to sleep retelling his adventures.

PHASE 2

8 / THOR: THE DARK WORLD

U.S. Release Date: Nov. 8, 2013

Director: Alan Taylor

Starring: Chris Hemsworth (Thor), Natalie Portman (Jane Foster), Tom Hiddleston (Loki), Anthony Hopkins (Odin), Jaimie Alexander (Sif), Idris Elba (Heimdall), Christopher Eccleston (Malekith)

Plot: Convergence, an alignment of the Nine Realms, is coming and Thor must team up with his brother Loki to help stop the Dark Elf Malekith, who wants to destroy the realms with a weapon known as the Aether.

End Scenes: Sif and Volstagg trust the wrong person to protect the Aether, and Thor is reunited with Jane Foster.

HAMMER OF THE GOD
Chris Hemsworth (right) stars in *Thor: The Dark World*, in which the superhero has to team up with his nemesis.

PHASE 2

9 / CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER SOLDIER

U.S. Release Date: April 4, 2014

Directors: Anthony and Joe Russo

Starring: Chris Evans (Captain America), Sebastian Stan (Winter Soldier), Anthony Mackie (Falcon), Scarlett Johansson (Black Widow), Hayley Atwell (Peggy Carter)

Plot: Spy agency S.H.I.E.L.D. has been compromised by Hydra, and an enemy assassin known as the Winter Soldier is wreaking havoc, forcing Captain America to team up with Black Widow and Falcon. He soon discovers that the assassin bears a familiar face.

End Scenes: Baron Stucker is studying the Scepter, and has captured Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch. And Winter Solider sees a Smithsonian exhibit for the thought-to-be-deceased Bucky Barnes.

PHASE 2

10 / GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

U.S. Release Date: August 1, 2014

Director: James Gunn

Starring: Chris Pratt (Star-Lord), Zoe Saldaña (Gamora), Dave Bautista (Drax the Destroyer), Vin Diesel (voice of Groot), Bradley Cooper (voice of Rocket), Lee Pace (Ronan the Accuser), Michael Rooker (Yondu), Karen Gillan (Nebula), Djimon Hounsou (Korath), Glenn Close (Nova Prime) and Benicio del Toro (The Collector)

Plot: A ragtag group of space criminals steal a powerful artifact called the Orb and run afoul of a Kree war criminal and the Nova Empire. Can the team—which includes a protégé of the mad space titan Thanos—actually do something heroic?

End Scenes: Maligned Marvel character Howard the Duck watches a gross interaction.

PHASE 2

11 / AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON

U.S. Release Date: May 1, 2015

Director: Joss Whedon

Starring: Robert Downey Jr. (Iron Man), Chris Evans (Captain America), Mark Ruffalo (Hulk), Chris Hemsworth (Thor), Scarlett Johansson (Black Widow), Jeremy Renner (Hawkeye), Don Cheadle (War Machine), Anthony Mackie (Falcon), Hayley Atwell (Peggy Carter), Aaron Taylor-Johnson (Quicksilver), Elizabeth Olsen (Scarlet Witch), Paul Bettany (Vision), James Spader (voice of Ultron) and Samuel L. Jackson (Nick Fury)

Plot: The Avengers raid a Hydra compound in the European country of Sokovia, freeing the Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver and recovering Loki's scepter. Later, Tony Stark's global defense program Ultron gains sentience, and builds itself bodies, intent on destroying the Avengers.

End Scenes: Thanos dons the Infinity Gauntlet and plans to seek out the Infinity Stones.

PHASE 2

12 / ANT-MAN

U.S. Release Date: July 17, 2015

Director: Peyton Reed

Starring: Paul Rudd (Scott Lang/Ant-Man), Evangeline Lilly (Hope van Dyne), Corey Stoll (Darren Cross/Yellowjacket), Anthony Mackie (Falcon), Abby Ryder Fortson (Cassie Lang) and Michael Douglas (Hank Pym)

Plot: Scientist Hank Pym manipulates thief Scott Lang into becoming the shrinking superhero known as Ant-Man, and a size-changing battle against a villain named Yellowjacket ensues.

End Scenes: Hope van Dyne is presented with the Wasp supersuit, and Captain America and Falcon discuss what to do with Winter Soldier.

PHASE 3

13 / CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

U.S. Release Date: May 6, 2016

Directors: Anthony and Joe Russo

Starring: Chris Evans (Captain America), Robert Downey Jr. (Iron Man), Scarlett Johansson (Black Widow), Sebastian Stan (Winter Soldier), Anthony Mackie (Falcon), Don Cheadle (War Machine), Jeremy Renner (Hawkeye), Chadwick Boseman (Black Panther), Paul Bettany (Vision), Elizabeth Olsen (Scarlet Witch), Paul Rudd (Ant-Man), Tom Holland (Spider-Man), William Hurt (General Thaddeus “Thunderbolt” Ross) and Daniel Brühl (Baron Helmut Zemo)

Plot: The U.N. wants to pass the Sokovian Accords, which would give government oversight of any superpowered individuals, and the Avengers team and their allies split into two combative factions: one for the Accords, and one against it.

End Scenes: Captain America thanks Black Panther for granting Winter Soldier asylum in Wakanda until he can be cured. And Spider-Man invents a new device.

PHASE 3

14 / DOCTOR STRANGE

U.S. Release Date: Nov. 4, 2016

Director: Scott Derrickson

Starring: Benedict Cumberbatch (Dr. Stephen Strange), Chiwetel Ejiofor (Karl Mordo), Rachel McAdams (Christine Palmer), Benedict Wong (Wong), Mads Mikkelsen (Kaecilius) and Tilda Swinton (the Ancient One)

Plot: After a car crash ends his medical career, neurosurgeon Stephen Strange begins to study the mystic arts at the temples at Kamar-Taj. But when the Dark Dimension encroaches on Earth, Strange must use the powerful Eye of Agamotto and time-reversal magic to save humanity.

End Scenes: Doctor Strange agrees to help Thor and Loki find Odin, and Mordo begins removing magic from other sorcerers.

PHASE 3

15 / GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOL. 2

U.S. Release Date: May 5, 2017

Director: James Gunn

Starring: Chris Pratt (Star-Lord), Zoe Saldaña (Gamora), Dave Bautista (Drax the Destroyer), Vin Diesel (voice of Groot), Bradley Cooper (voice of Rocket), Michael Rooker (Yondu), Karen Gillan (Nebula), Pom Klementieff (Mantis), Kurt Russell (Ego) and Sylvester Stallone (Stakar Ogord)

Plot: The Guardians find out exactly who—or what—Star-Lord's father is, oppose a god-like Celestial and are pursued by the Ravagers.

End Scenes: The original Guardians talk about getting back together, a mysterious creature called Adam is introduced (presaging Adam Warlock) and the Watchers are revealed to be keeping an eye on the multiverse.

SPECIAL TEAM
Chris Pratt (left, center) stars in *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, the eighth-highest grossing film of 2017.

PHASE 3

16 / SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING

U.S. Release Date: July 7, 2017

Director: Jon Watts

Starring: Tom Holland (Peter Parker/Spider-Man), Michael Keaton (Vulture), Robert Downey Jr. (Iron Man), Jon Favreau (Happy Hogan), Gwyneth Paltrow (Pepper Potts), Zendaya (Michelle "MJ"), Jacob Batalon (Ned Leeds), Bokeem Woodbine (Shocker) and Marisa Tomei (Aunt May Parker)

Plot: Peter Parker is a typical high school kid, except he's also secretly Spider-Man. While facing the Vulture and other dangers, Peter is mentored by none other than Iron Man.

End Scenes: Vulture denies knowing what Spider-Man's secret identity is to another villain, and Captain America films a cheeky public service announcement.

PHASE 3

17 / THOR: RAGNAROK

U.S. Release Date: Nov. 3, 2017

Director: Taika Waititi

Starring: Chris Hemsworth (Thor), Tom Hiddleston (Loki), Anthony Hopkins (Odin), Idris Elba (Heimdall), Cate Blanchett (Hela), Jeff Goldblum (Grandmaster), Tessa Thompson (Valkyrie), Karl Urban (Skurge) and Mark Ruffalo (Hulk)

Plot: Thor is trapped on the garbage-filled gladiatorial planet of Sakaar with the Hulk, while Hela, goddess of death, sets her sights on destroying Asgard.

End Scenes: Loki and Thor discuss returning to Earth and have their way blocked by a large spacecraft, and the Grandmaster makes a ruling for the citizens of the planet Sakaar.

PHASE 3

18 / BLACK PANTHER

U.S. Release Date: Feb. 16, 2018

Director: Ryan Coogler

Starring: Chadwick Boseman (T'Challa/Black Panther), Michael B. Jordan (Killmonger), Lupita Nyong'o (Nakia), Danai Gurira (Okoye), Martin Freeman (CIA Agent Everett K. Ross), Letitia Wright (Shuri), Winston Duke (M'Baku), Angela Bassett (Ramonda), Forest Whitaker (Zuri) and Andy Serkis (Ulysses Klaue)

Plot: The African country of Wakanda is the world's most advanced place, but its policy of isolationism from the outside world—especially after it is revealed that it is the source of the powerful metal vibranium—is challenged when the king dies, and his heir, T'Challa, is challenged by Killmonger and others.

End Scenes: Wakanda decides to open itself up to the world, and Shuri helps Bucky Barnes to heal.

PHASE 3

19 / AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR

U.S. Release Date: April 27, 2018

Directors: Anthony and Joe Russo

Starring: Robert Downey Jr. (Iron Man), Chris Hemsworth (Thor), Mark Ruffalo (Hulk), Chris Evans (Captain America), Scarlett Johansson (Black Widow), Benedict Cumberbatch (Doctor Strange), Don Cheadle (War Machine), Tom Holland (Spider-Man), Chadwick Boseman (Black Panther), Paul Bettany (Vision), Elizabeth Olsen (Scarlet Witch), Anthony Mackie (Falcon), Sebastian Stan (Winter Soldier), Tom Hiddleston (Loki), Idris Elba (Heimdall), Chris Pratt (Star-Lord), Zoe Saldaña (Gamora), Dave Bautista (Drax the Destroyer), Vin Diesel (voice of Groot), Bradley Cooper (voice of Rocket), Gwyneth Paltrow (Pepper Potts), Benicio del Toro (The Collector) and Josh Brolin (Thanos)

Plot: If Thanos gets the six Infinity Stones, half of all life in the universe will end.

End Scenes: As he crumbles to dust from Thanos' snap, Nick Fury sends a distress signal to Captain Marvel in space.

PHASE 3

20 / ANT-MAN AND THE WASP

U.S. Release Date: July 6, 2018

Director: Peyton Reed

Starring: Paul Rudd (Scott Lang/Ant-Man), Evangeline Lilly (Hope van Dyne/the Wasp), Abby Ryder Fortson (Cassie Lang), Hannah John-Kamen (Ghost), Michelle Pfeiffer (Janet van Dyne), Laurence Fishburne (Bill Foster) and Michael Douglas (Hank Pym)

Plot: Ant-Man and the Wasp get caught in a battle against a woman who can phase through solid objects, even as they race in time to get to the Quantum Realm and save Janet van Dyne from her exile.

End Scenes: Hank Pym, Janet van Dyne and Hope van Dyne crumble to dust from Thanos' snap, stranding Ant-Man in the Quantum Realm, plus a giant ant plays drums.

PHASE 3

21 / CAPTAIN MARVEL

U.S. Release Date: March 8, 2019

Directors: Anna Boden & Ryan Fleck

Starring: Brie Larson (Carol Danvers/Captain Marvel), Samuel L. Jackson (Nick Fury), Ben Mendelsohn (Talos/Keller), Djimon Hounsou (Korath), Lee Pace (Ronan the Accuser), Lashana Lynch (Maria Rambeau), Gemma Chan (Minn-Erva), Annette Bening (Supreme Intelligence/Mar-Vell), Clark Gregg (Phil Coulson, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.) and Jude Law (Yon-Rogg)

Plot: A galactic conflict between the shape-shifting Skrull and the powerful Kree is the backdrop for Carol Danvers searching for her roots on Earth ... and how she became a powerful warrior in space.

End Scenes: The surviving Avengers are conferencing when Captain Marvel reappears, and Nick Fury's cat regurgitates the Tesseract he ate.

PHASE 3

22 / AVENGERS: ENDGAME

U.S. Release Date: April 26, 2019

Directors: Anthony and Joe Russo

Starring: Pretty much everyone

Plot: After the surviving heroes race through time itself to reverse the effects of Thanos' snap, almost every heroic character who ever appeared in an MCU film gathers to take down Thanos once and for all.

End Scenes: There were no new end scenes for this film, though a trailer for the next Spider-Man movie was eventually added.

PHASE 3

23 / SPIDER-MAN: FAR FROM HOME

U.S. Release Date: July 2, 2019

Director: Jon Watts

Starring: Tom Holland (Peter Parker/Spider-Man), Samuel L. Jackson (Nick Fury), Zendaya (Michelle "MJ" Jones-Watson), Jacob Batalon (Ned Leeds), Jon Favreau (Happy Hogan), Jake Gyllenhaal (Mysterio) and Marisa Tomei (Aunt May Parker)

Plot: Mourning the death of Iron Man, Peter Parker goes to Europe on a school trip. There, he is caught up in a battle against Elemental creatures, and is seemingly aided by the new multiversal "hero" Mysterio. But all is not as it seems.

End Scenes: *The Daily Bugle* reveals to the world that Peter Parker is Spider-Man and alleges that he murdered Mysterio, while Nick Fury and Maria Hill are revealed to be shape-shifting Skrulls working with the real Nick Fury ... who is away from Earth on a Skrull spaceship.

CHAPTER 8

MAD ABOUT THE MULTIVERSE

Where does the MCU go from here?

BACK FOR MORE
Anything is possible in the MCU, where Scott Lang became Ant-Man in 2015 (right), 36 years after he did it the first time.

For a long time, the comic book industry pushed the boundaries of imagination but always held firm to one rule: Each company had a shared universe, with a shared continuity. If a story or character appeared in one Marvel or DC Comics title, it could be referenced or appear in another Marvel or DC title. DC eventually expanded the concept of shared universes into a Multiverse—a collection of parallel realities that contained variations of the "prime" universe, where characters could have different destinies or costumes or histories. Marvel eventually adopted its own version of the Multiverse in the pages of its comics as well, and later, in the movies. All of the movies in the MCU not only exist in the same reality, they share characters and timelines and concepts.

By embracing the comic book concepts of the Multiverse, as Marvel has done in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, the filmmakers have given themselves unprecedented freedom while still maintaining central characters and themes. The Multiverse ties all of the stories together and, conversely, also allows for millions of alternate realities. Each Spider-Man, from the comics to animation to television to video games to film, exists in its own reality. But when Marvel wants to connect those realities together, it can. If it wants to create something entirely new, or move a known story in a different direction, it is protected by the realm of "What If…?"

For Marvel, it is the perfect solution to having it all. The current creators of the *Star Trek* franchise have used similar themes with parallel universes. An example of a franchise that has not embraced a multiverse is *Star Wars*—where some projects (mostly the films) are deemed canon and many of the others (like nearly three decades of book and comic mythology) have been tossed aside.

The question of canon or multiversity is an important one for those who call themselves Marvel fans. All of the stories that existed for all of the Marvel characters in the pages of the comics still exist. They will never be erased, even if aspects of them are changed. The comics inform not only the storylines of MCU films and TV shows, but also the way characters are written, how costumes are designed, and the way actors learn about their roles. The work of the writers and artists who made the comics influences and permeates every frame of film and every second of screen time.

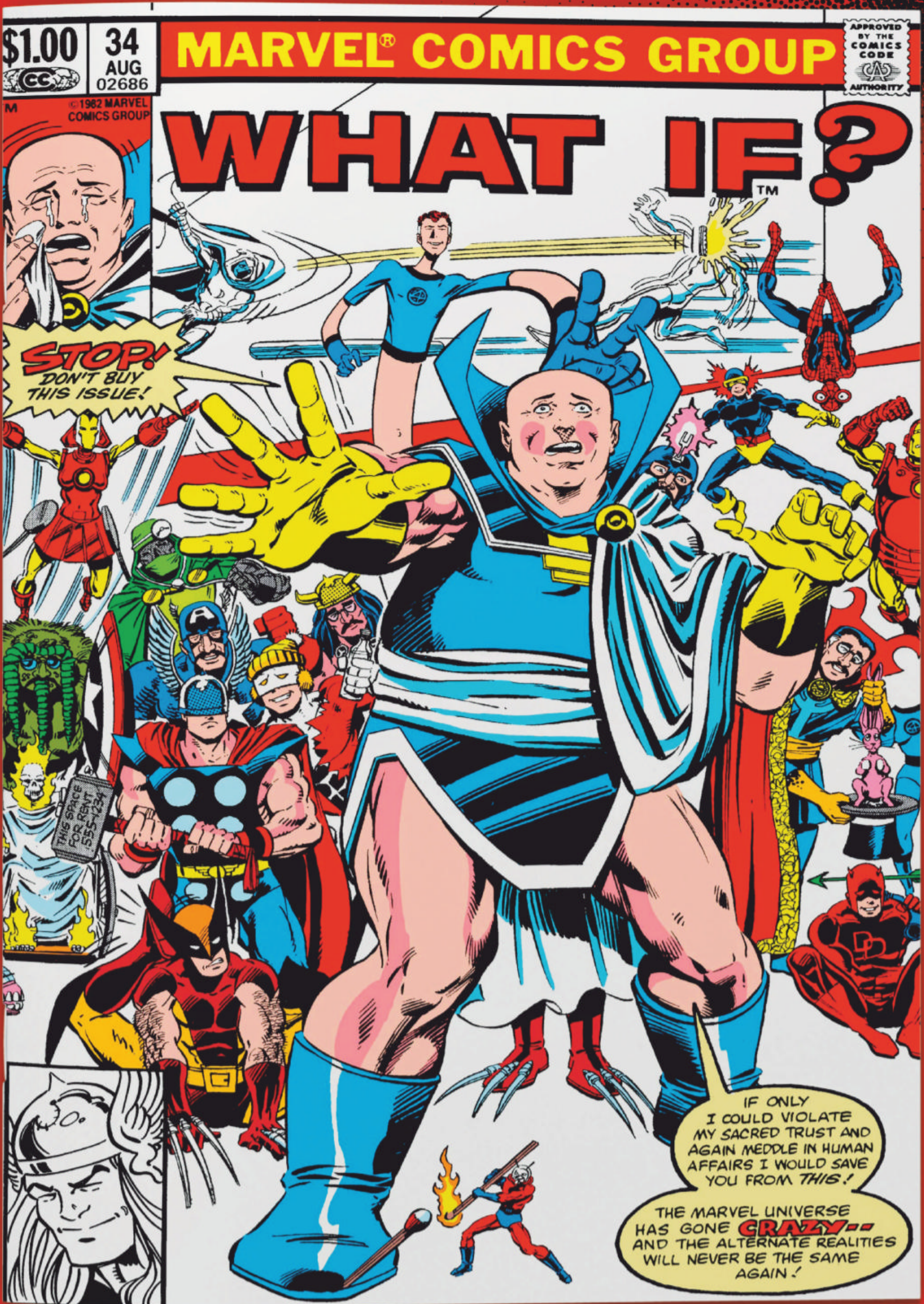
As fans wait to find out what happens to Ant-Man and the Wasp after *Quantumania*, as they wonder what Kang is going to do to Marvel's Multiverse, and as they ponder the ever-growing schedule of streaming shows and movies … they can find answers (and experience millions of new stories and adventures) in the pages of the comics. Much like the end-credit scenes in the movies, this printed content holds clues and Easter eggs, insights, excitement and—yes—red herrings.

If that seems like too much to keep track of, just remember it's all meant to be escapist fun. Marvel has worked hard to ensure that each of its projects can stand alone as enjoyable even if it's the first—or only—adventure that you consume.

Of course, what Marvel wants even more is for fans to become hooked on the puzzle—to keep looking forward to what happens next in a continuing, multidimensional saga. Ultimately, that's what the Multiverse is all about—and Ant-Man is the tiny gatekeeper to the rest of the adventure.

THE QUESTION OF CANON OR MULTIVERSITY IS AN IMPORTANT ONE FOR THOSE WHO CALL THEMSELVES MARVEL FANS.

CONTINUITY MARVEL
The Multiverse means that even the most bizarre issues of Marvel comics will never be erased or forgotten.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ANT-MAN

AND THE FUTURE OF MARVEL

WHAT IS MARVEL'S MULTIVERSE ALL ABOUT? IT'S A PUZZLE—PART OF A CONTINUING, MULTIDIMENSIONAL SAGA—AND ANT-MAN IS THE TINY GATEKEEPER TO THE REST OF THE ADVENTURE.